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A very fitting finale

The Defender Celebration leaves to our Editor pausing for thought

It was clearly not just the end of a model range, it was the closure of a significant chapter in the story of the British motor industry

So, that's it then. The End. The very last Defender has now completed its journey around the out-dated, yet highly atmospheric Lode Lane factory at Solihull. Yet it's more than that; it's also the very last of the authentic Land Rovers. The final Heritage spec model was rightly cheered along the line, fireworks were ignited, cameras flashed from all directions. The 700 or so Defender workforce downed tools, and everyone congratulated them on a job well done. The last Defender stood proudly alongside various Land Rovers from the company's impressive Heritage Fleet, and that was when it really struck home. Now the Defender's gone, will there ever be another Land Rover ambulance, fire engine, ice cream van, or opened-topped Royal carriage? Unlikely. There certainly will never be a fully tracked model, or an amphibious one that this magazine would float across the lochs of Scotland. It was quite clearly not just the end of a model range, it was the closure of a significant chapter in the story of the British motor industry.

Hailed as a Celebration by Jaguar Land Rover, there was understandably a lot of cheers, smiles, glad-handing and some wistful shaking of heads. The majority of the 700 workforce will not take up their tools in anger again. The good news is that no one has been made redundant, and only a handful have chosen to retire. The remainder will all be employed elsewhere in JLR's ever expanding empire. But this will be assisting the efficient computerised robots in their production tasks, not grabbing the rubber mallet and nudging that final piece of trim into place; robots don't allow such individuality. Gone are the days of hand built production line Land Rovers.

Gone certainly, but there is still a future for the Land Rover Defender. Among the flash TV-style presentation that accompanied the last Defender's final journey, JLR's CEO Dr Ralf Speth gave an impassioned speech in which he said, on at least four occasions, that the Defender name will continue. The important comment, of course, was that the new model would be, "a Defender for the 21st Century". How close this new model is to production and launch, we do not know. That it will be endowed with excellent off-roading abilities is a given, but it will be different. Gone will be the aluminium body panels, replaced in all likelihood with an aluminium monocoque. Will the new Defender even have a gear lever? Probably not, it certainly won't have two and low range – if it has that – will be electronically engaged. It will also be more comfortable to drive and passenger in, and it won't leak; the question will be whether it's a real Land Rover? It was hard last month not to conclude that we had all just seen the very last Land Rover ever to be built.

As I walked back to the car park to return home after the celebration – ironically to our Long Term Mitsubishi L200, just the sort of vehicle that has taken up the sales 'slack' left by the Defender – I passed numerous (and I do mean numerous) new Jaguar F-Pace SUVs, together with countless hundred grand Range Rovers and Range Rover Sports that appeared abandoned around Lode Lane's complex and confusing internal road system. Fabulous machines, they are the future of a profitable JLR. However, when in that future any of these models come to be replaced, will they get such an emotional send off? Of course not, those days are over.

Nigel Fryatt, Editor

OFF-ROADING WITH US THIS MONTH



We are joined by the Lode Lane Land Rover workforce in celebration of the build of the last Defender. **Tools down on page 18**



The draw of Africa saw one self-confessed off-roading virgin hire a Nissan pick-up for a once in a lifetime drive. **Lions roar on page 44**



Sparks fly as we learn more about one energy company's extensive 4x4 fleet, which includes some awesome Unimogs. **Switch on page 52**

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**Marvellous
Mahindra**



**Auction
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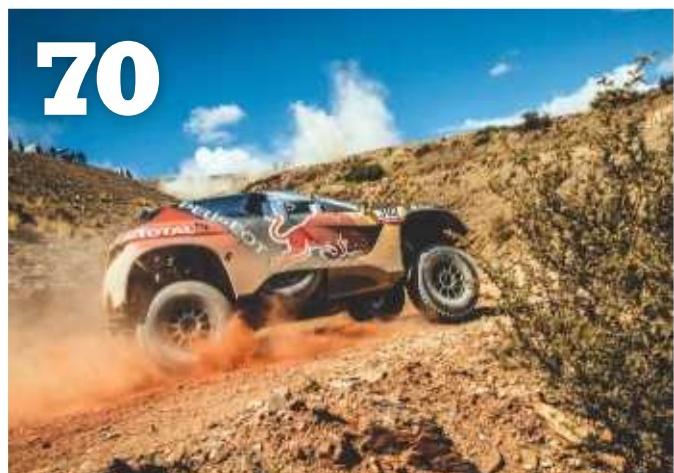
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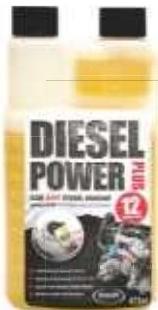
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News & Views

INSIDE THE WORLD OF 4X4



OFFICIAL JEEP OFF-ROAD CENTRE

MANUFACTURER SUPPORTS NEW OFF-ROAD DRIVING EXPERIENCE

THE LAST FEW years have been busy for Jeep. From looking out for the count towards the end of 2008, it has restructured and rebuilt under the controlling hands of Fiat, and launched some excellent new models into the market, which most importantly have sold rather well! It is, however, one thing selling a vehicle in a glitzy showroom, where the salesmen will explain the delights of the vehicle's 'infotainment' system and how the rear seats fold, it is another explaining just how competent these new Jeeps are when they take to the rough stuff. Indeed, this was the very conversation this magazine had with

Jeep UK's Brand Head, Damien Dally, at the launch of the then brand new Cherokee in the summer of 2014. How pleasing therefore that we can announce that the manufacturer has gone into partnership with specialist off-road driving organisation 4x4 Events UK, to launch the first official Jeep Off-road Centre. This now means that if you are considering a new Jeep, but want to actually see what the fuss is about, and to see just how good these new models are when off-road, you can now do so!

The team at 4x4 Events UK, operate from sites in Wales, Cheshire and Yorkshire and use the full Jeep range of Cherokee, Wrangler, Grand Cherokee and the excellent Renegade – winner of our 4x4 Of The Year 2016.

The men behind the centre are Nigel Mayne and Phil Reeves (pictured left) and they offer a range of specialist courses, driving days, private tuition and experience days. The broad approach means that if you have some off-road experience and want to learn more about just how good a Wrangler is, they can help, but if you've never taken to the rough stuff, and fancy having a go in the new Cherokee, that's no problem at all.

"Jeep is an iconic brand which is growing and heading back to the top, where it

belongs," says Nigel Mayne. "We wanted to be a part of that success, and were delighted to team up with Jeep. We knew the range was full of good off-road vehicles but we have been amazed at just how good they are."

Now we all know just how good the Land Rover Experience operation is, and this Jeep set-up has a way to go to match that, but it's certainly a very good start and, we have to admit, not before time. Whether our conversation with the Jeep bosses had any affect we'll never know, but we are certainly pleased it's finally got off the ground. "I'm delighted that Jeep has teamed up with 4x4 Events UK," Damien Dally, commented when the centre was announced. "Our great line-up of cars, and their fantastic driving centres and expert tuition, make a very good combination which I hope many people across the UK will have a chance to enjoy."

We wish the guys much success, and will actually be visiting the centre in the near future and giving you a full report in a forthcoming issue. If you can't wait that long and wish to find out more and get behind the wheel of a Renegade in the mud, go to www.4x4eventsuk.co.uk or call 01829 782045 or 01745 825369, and remember to say 4x4 Magazine sent you. Trust us, you'll enjoy it.





THE
LAST
ONE
PAGE 18



NEW
KIA
SPORTAGE
PAGE 23



YOUR
FIRST
4X4
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FANCY AN OFF-ROAD HOLIDAY?



RENEGADE NIGHT EAGLE

WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT of the new official Jeep driving centre comes the latest special edition of the Renegade. This new limited edition 'Night Eagle' is based on the mid-range Longitude but has 17inch black alloy wheels, rear parking sensors, satin grey Jeep badges, coloured roof bars and side mirrors, satin grey grille rings and a black front grille. All very mean and moody, there will only be 350 Night Eagles in the UK, of these, only 160 will be available in the unique Volcano Sand matt paint finish. The other Night Eagle options are Carbon Black and Alpine White. You'll obviously want the version with the 2.0-litre MultiJet 140bhp engine, and the OTR price is £24,095. Of course, if the Jeep dealer you visit has a Trailhawk Renegade on display you'll be raiding the kids' piggy bank to find the extra dosh, since that's the one you really want!

NOW THIS IS what we call a package holiday! And what a package. Land Rover has partnered with luxury travel expert Abercrombie & Kent to offer what they are describing as 'the most luxurious road trip on earth'. The trip will actually put you behind the wheel of a Range Rover SV Autobiography for 21 days of 'unparalleled luxury combined with the greatest driving routes the world has to offer, both on and off the road'. It's claimed that the trip will actually cover some five continents, eight countries and nine of the world's best hotels. As Mark Cameron, Land Rover Experiential Marketing Director, at Jaguar

Land Rover explained: "We set out to design a trip worthy of the ultimate luxury SUV and thanks to our partners at Abercrombie & Kent we have achieved just that. From Europe to Australia, this trip is all about the epitome of luxury but done so in a Land Rover way – the unexpected, the off-the-beaten-track and the once-in-a-lifetime experiences. This itinerary represents the definitive drive adventure, achieved in the definitive vehicle." The crunch, of course, is that prices 'start at £100,000 per person'. Ah well, there's always the chance that lottery ticket will come up...

TOMB RAIDER AT AUCTION

WITH ALL THE fuss about the very end of Defender production (see page 18) it's appropriate that this pre-production 2001 Land Rover Defender 110 'Tomb Raider' has come up for sale this March at the Historics at Brookland classic car auction. The Defender is painted dark metallic grey with special badging and details, and equipped with a roof-rack, additional spot lights, front and rear remote winches, bull-bars and snorkel as well as uprated shock absorbers and springs, privacy glass and a Category 1 alarm/immobiliser and tracker (you'll need that). This model was actually the very first Tomb Raider, and also has upgraded quilted leather seating, air-conditioning and the exclusive Tomb Raider plaque. The vehicle could well have been sold as you read this as the auction is on 12 March. As this is being written, the estimate by the auctioneers is between £16,000-£22,000, now we think that's somewhat conservative... We'll report on what it went for in our next issue.





WINTER SPORTS!

WRITING THIS IN mid February, you have to wonder where winter has gone, and certainly whether we will be getting any snow this year. It seems, however, that the manufacturers have decided to find some for a number of interesting promotional activities involving 4x4s. Any football fans out there, and probably a lot of you not so interested, will probably know that a certain José Mourinho (below) has had some time on his hands since being sacked by his Russian boss. Well, if you were worrying about how he was filling his time, fear not, he's been having a ball ice driving on a 60km frozen lake in Arjeplog, Sweden. All to help promote the forthcoming launch of the Jaguar F-Pace. This extreme driver training experience takes place just 40 miles from the Arctic Circle, with temperatures as low as -30degC. Mourinho was instructed by Finnish driver Tommi Karrinaho and seemed to enjoy himself: "The flying lap with Tommi sent my adrenaline soaring. It's something I've only ever experienced before when I have walked out in front of 80,000 football fans." Jaguar intends to make this experience available to all with a new Ice Driving Experience being launched in 2017.

After ice driving, it was Nissan's turn to promote the seven-seat capacity of the X-Trail

by making a seven seat bobsleigh and testing it at the historic track in Innsbruck, Austria. The bobsleigh was driven by British Olympic medallist Sean Olsson and is capable of speeds over 60mph and pulling a G-Force of 4.5G. You can check this out at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tL2RLeYGEI>

If sitting down at speed seems a little tame, then there's always the option to go snowboarding... being towed behind a Mitsubishi ASX across a frozen lake at St Moritz, Switzerland. This was the choice of British snowboarder Jamie Barrow, and the drive was attended by Guinness World Record officials. Jamie's first run was recorded at 100.840kph, but because the criteria for the Guinness World Record states that two runs, one in both directions, has to be recorded, the return run back was recorded at 'only' 98.901kph. With both runs averaged, it gives the Guinness World record speed of 99.871kph. His comment immediately after the runs was, "I'm ecstatic at beating the record! I do think though that I could've easily handled going a lot faster if it wasn't for the soft snow due to unseasonably mild weather." We might have all been without much snow this winter, but others have been enjoying the white stuff!



ELECTRIC AVENUE

NISSAN'S SUNDERLAND PLANT has established itself as one of the company's major global manufacturing centres, producing boatloads of Qashqai. It has now had further recognition with the announcement that it will be the place for the future generation of Nissan electric vehicles. This actually means an impressive £26.5m investment into the UK to produce Nissan's lithium-ion battery components, the largest of its type in Europe. Whatever the traditionalists may think, electric vehicles are definitely on the increase. As Paul Willcox, Chairman, Nissan Europe, explained: "With 200,000 customers around the world already, the Nissan LEAF has transformed the performance and perception of EVs and made Nissan the undisputed leader in EV technology. Today's announcement reflects Nissan's intention to remain EV leaders for many years to come, with our UK operations at the heart of our future innovations." Quite how the future will pan out is yet to be seen, but it's more than just making lots of batteries and it is great to see the UK at the forefront of this sort of innovation (we still think a fully electric 4x4 would make an excellent off-road machine!). Nissan is working within a consortium called Hyperdrive Innovation, which includes Warwick Manufacturing Group, University of Warwick, Newcastle University and Zero Carbon Futures, who will work together on key areas of future battery development.



NEW 4x4 TYRE WEBSITE

NOW THIS WILL be useful, a brand new website designed specifically for 4x4 and SUV owners. The new site is at www.4site4x4tyres.co.uk, and comes, as you may have realised, from the guys behind 4SITE 4x4 Tyres, the leading independent 4x4 specialists in the UK. These guys know about tyres (they are our first stop when we need anything 4x4 tyre-related!). The site has an approved dealer locator, as well as a search function for a huge range of tyres using size, vehicle registration number and driving requirements. You will get three options; budget, mid-range and premium. If you want to know more call 0870 112 9407 or check the new website!



SUBARU XV UPGRADE

THIS IS ONE SUV that we think is under-rated, and under sold, since you don't see that many on the road, which is a shame in that it does offer something a little different in an age when a lot of 'crossovers' seem to be falling over themselves to all look and drive exactly the same. Subaru's XV has had an upgrade for 2016. The model uses the company's Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive system, which as a road-biased 4x4 system is actually pretty good on the slippery stuff. The different point with the Subaru is, of course, the low-mounted four cylinder Boxer engine, which gives the XV excellent driving characteristics. Engine options are both in petrol and diesel formats, with six speed manual and CVT automatic transmissions. For this model year, the vehicle has a number of interior and exterior improvements and a new seven inch infotainment system with Siri Eyes-Free voice controls. The upgraded 2016 Subaru XV retains its existing on-the-road price, with the range starting from £21,995 (on-the-road). The Subaru XV is offered with a five-year, 100,000-mile warranty. Worth a look if you don't want to follow the usual SUV crowd. Interestingly, there will be a new 'Subaru XV Concept' launched at the forthcoming Geneva Motor Show, which opens after we go to press with this issue. We look forward to seeing it and will report in next month's issue.

VERY SMART TOP, SIR!

JUST AS THE characteristics of the pick-up are changing, making the latest models far more than just commercial workhorses, so is the designs of the truck tops. This is the latest from Isuzu for the mighty D-Max. It's called the Alpha Type-E Canopy and certainly looks very stylish on the rear of the double cab model. As an OE product, fitting means that it will include central locking from the factory key – a bonus for any who have struggled with some fiddly little 1970s-type key to open some aftermarket truck top or roller cover! The top also has brushed alloy roof bars that are more than just decorative and offer additional carrying capacity. This year is actually Isuzu's centenary and this will be marked with a number of model upgrades and special events throughout the UK. Last year the company sold an impressive 6220 D-Max pick-ups, which is a significant rise from the 1076 models that sold with the first UK pick-up in 2009. While it's 100 years in existence, it's actually 30 in the UK, where the marque's launch was started by the Trooper. Shame that model didn't continue.



FLOOD DAMAGE WORRY

HPI WARNS THAT this winter's extreme weather means that there could well be a lot of flood damaged vehicles entering the second-hand market. It may surprise to realise that a staggering 237,000 cars are written off every year, and of course some sellers try to pass on vehicles without declaring this fact. Given that a lot of vehicles will actually have suffered from flooding this winter, it pays to check before you buy and that's where the HPI Check comes in. It's not actually illegal to professionally repair and sell certain insurance write-offs, but you do need to let the buyer know! The HPI Check will do that for you and so it's worth going to www.hpicheck.com before you buy.

And briefly...

► The Retail Motor Industry Federation's (RMF) training centre, is now running a pilot for the new MOT tester training from April this year, aimed at creating a higher professional standard.

► SsangYong has launched a special programme for the Tivoli for driving schools. The programme will support the necessary fitment of dual controls, and 'L-plate' roof signs. Makes sense, since a great many first time drivers go on to buy the vehicle that they learnt in.



► Jaguar Land Rover is again going to sponsor the UK Team in this year's Invictus Games – the sporting event for wounded, injured and sick serving personnel and veterans. JLR has also hired over 200 former servicemen and women since 2013.

► Seen your Driving Licence lately? It seems that some 44 per cent of us have the wrong address on there, and 15 per cent don't even know where their Driving Licence actually is... honestly officer... according to research carried out by www.vouchercodespro.co.uk, a UK money-saving website.

► New car sales continue to rise, January 2016 being up 2.9 per cent on the same month last year. It seems customer confidence is growing and we are going out to buy new cars.

► Spring is on the way, so now is the time to start modifying that 4x4 sitting in the garage! Well that's what we think anyway, and next month is our special Modifications Issue where we look at what's on the market, who is doing what, and what vehicles can benefit. We also have an up-to-date Buying Guide on the Suzuki Jimny, one vehicle that benefits from a few tweaks. We also visit the new official Jeep Off-road Centre and have the strangest Willys Jeep commercial vehicle you'll have seen! Why not consider a subscription? Save money and have your favourite magazine delivered direct to your door. Check out page 50 for the latest money-saving offers.

4X4 OFF-ROAD QUOTE OF THE MONTH

I asked him: 'Will I have to go to prison?' which he thought was hilarious, for some reason, and after much friendly banter we paid the \$15 fine.

SOURCE: Novice off-roader Mike Breslin explains a friendly encounter with a policeman as he drove his hired Nissan pick-up across Africa. Follow his story on page 44



Out with the old...

As one icon leaves the stage, our columnist looks forward to the revised version of another 'true' off-roader

And so it ends. The very last Land Rover Defender has finally rolled off the Solihull production line (as our Editor describes on page 18). It's been a while coming, but 29th January finally signalled its demise. So what is happening to the production line? Well, the good news is that Land Rover is using it to restore Series models, sourced from all over the world which will then be sold – from July – as part of the new Heritage Restoration Programme. Various experts from the Defender line are being kept on. But we wait until 2018 for the real Defender replacement, which has all the hallmarks of being a decent off-roader, but this time featuring electronic wizardry of its bigger and more luxurious siblings. We wait with interest.

With the Land Rover Defender finally coming to an end and its replacement likely to be very different in terms of style, comfort and desirability, the very good news is that the update for the original 4x4 icon, Jeep Wrangler, due next year, is likely to closely resemble its predecessor. Jeep's head designer, Mark Allen, is reported to have said that the new model, 'JL', will 'not be much of a departure'. That means we still have the traditional body-on-frame construction, and it will look very similar, but there will be some alterations to the suspension geometry.

Spy photos have revealed that one model will sport Dana axles, and the fact that Dana has recently upgraded its production facilities would corroborate that. And we know there will finally be a stunning pick-up version – hurrah. There have been rumours that the new Wrangler would sport an all-aluminium body, but that seems unlikely. What may happen is that doors and/or bonnet could be of the lighter-weight metal. The Wrangler needs to lose weight and so this could be a viable way of resolving this issue.

In America, there is still a little doubt that a diesel engine will be offered, but we will surely get one over here, east of The Pond. Plus commentators are predicting a smaller capacity four-cylinder petrol engine to keep the fuel efficiency and environmental chaps happy. What we do know is that it will be slightly smaller, lighter and have a non-folding windscreens with more of a rake for better aerodynamics. We don't object to that at all.

As when the DC100 concept for the Land Rover came out, some long-serving Wrangler enthusiasts will no doubt hate their new model. But in a few years it will be the best yet as the

current model has become. Not many liked the four-door version when it first appeared, but that grew on everybody. The replacement 'Defender' reaction will probably be the same – these two icons are so alike it's ridiculous.

That's the latest for our mighty 4x4 icons; and elsewhere our market is looking very healthy. Latest figures suggest, incredibly, that in 2015 European SUV registrations outsold all other segments with small SUVs blasting through one million units.

The small SUV sales contributed almost 38 per cent of total SUV registrations. Despite that strong growth, they were still behind the compact SUVs, which accounted for 40 per cent of the total at 1.28 million units; and the mid-sized brigade registered a whopping 42 per cent increase. The large SUVs came last with 243,000 units, up by 27 per cent on 2014's results. Here in the UK we showed our undying love for the SUV by showing the highest volume increase from 501,200 units in 2014 to 630,400 in 2015.

Within all these remarkable stats, Nissan

takes top spot with more than 376,000 units and 11.8 per cent market share. Renault occupied second position, which may surprise you, partly because of the new Kadjar, and the French manufacturer moved further ahead of Volkswagen whose registrations remained static – but then we might have expected that due to the diesel emissions test scandal that seems to have blown over now.

So it all looks very rosy for the '4x4' market amid our Defender tears, and with the ton-load of new vehicles coming this year – mentioned in previous columns – nothing is letting up yet. Expect more flamboyant results for 2016.

So to finish in all this 4x4 glory I give you an emotional photograph of me with the last ever 'new' Defender in its current guise that I will ever drive – from our 4x4 Of The Year test 2016. Cheero old mate; it's been an absolute pleasure. The Solihull giant is dead; but I can't wait for the successor to rear its svelte head. In the annoyingly drawn-out meantime; long live the leaner, meaner '17 Jeep Wrangler and that sexy pick-up! **Hils**





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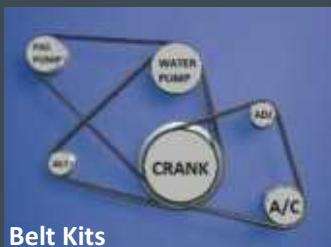
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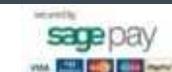


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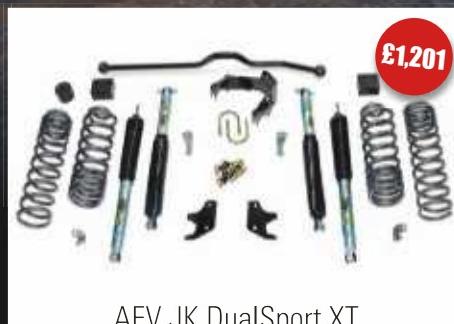
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DEFENDER CELEBRATION

Last Land Rover Defender



The End.

Friday 29th January 2016 marked the day the last Land Rover rolled, slowly, off the Lode Lane, Solihull production line. The badge, branding and the Defender name will continue, but not like this. Nigel Fryatt was there to watch the closure of a motoring epoch

As chassis number 2016933 came to the end of its 56-hour journey, the crowds were building. As it passed each workstation, tools were returned to benches, lockers closed; not to be used here ever again. Camera phones flashed, factory floor banter was rife, proud smiles beamed everywhere. And then came the cheer. Chassis 2016933 was finished, and the last Defender was ready to meet its public. The last real Land Rover was complete.

While it had taken the 56 hours necessary to hand-build chassis 2016933, the actual journey it completed had taken some 68 years. The famous Spencer and Maurice Wilks

drawing in the sand at Red Wharf Bay, Anglesey had been the inspiration for a vehicle designed originally just for agricultural use; to help drag a war-torn country back to prosperity, to allow farmers to work and feed a nation. The dimensions, indeed the overall silhouette has changed little, emphasised for the Lode Lane celebration with chassis 2106933 being a Heritage soft-top model, bearing the registration H166 HUE, in celebration of the famous Series I 'HUEY'. Back in 1948 the first Land Rover was built with an aluminium bodywork, not for lightness, not for strength, and not to avoid the dreaded rust, but because Post-war Britain had a

shortage of steel, yet an abundance of aluminium. How ironic, therefore, that as chassis number 2016933 was driven through the narrow doors of the factory for its celebration journey around Lode Lane, it passed scores of new Range Rovers, Range Rover Sports and numerous new Jaguar F-Pace SUVs all built, by robots, not people, at the same Lode Lane plant and all using aluminium monocoques. High tech, and with even higher prices, the heritage these super sophisticated vehicles owe the original Land Rover is clear.

Indeed, Lode Lane is like the Defender in being a triumph of function over form. To the



Right: Little has changed at Lode Lane from the start of original Land Rover production



DEFENDER CELEBRATION

Last Land Rover Defender

untrained eye it appears a muddled, almost chaotic industrial facility. The modern new visitor's centre, where wealthy new Range Rover owners can take delivery of their £100,000+ vehicles, sits incongruously across the main road of the bluff, dull, red brick building where it all began, where chassis number 2016933 took its final journey. The original building still has the evidence of the camouflage paintwork from the Second World War. Inside, as the pyrotechnics fizzed to celebrate chassis 2016933's arrival, they lit up the dirty, mould covered glass and bizarre netting of the factory's roof. Storm Gertrude had been due to deliver heavy rain on the day, but thankfully held off, in due respect perhaps of the fact that there are probably numerous Land Rovers around the world that go under the same name. That it didn't rain was a blessing, and saved the workforce using the usual buckets to collect the numerous leaks. When the building was first surveyed, to see if it was suitable for vehicle production, the experts stated it had a lifespan of around 70 years. Even they would be surprised at just how accurate that estimate has turned out to



From top left clockwise: Significant manufacturing milestones at Lode Lane; 50,000 Land Rovers in 1950; 100,000 Land Rovers in 1954; 250,000 Land Rovers in 1959; and the final 2016 celebrations for chassis number 2016933



be. It has now completed its job, building the very last Land Rover. Rebuilding the facility will start immediately, although specific plans have yet to be announced, but it is intended to keep the façade; dull and lifeless it may be architecturally, it nevertheless has a place in global motoring history that would make complete demolition a national disgrace. We applaud the plan to keep it, even as a mask to what will be happening behind it. And what exactly will that be?

While this was a celebration of a company's heritage, and it must be said, of its enthusiastic and loyal workforce, it marked the end of an era, and the future was much in evidence and regularly mentioned in dispatches. Jaguar Land Rover CEO, Dr Ralf Speth, made an impassioned speech, declaring: "This is not the end, that drawing on the beach will never be erased by the tide. We merely pause to think." Actually catching the microphone on occasion in his feverish delivery, he continued: "This is not the last Defender; far from it. We will now

Chassis number 2016933 had an audience for all sections of its build as it moved through Lode Lane





Left: Finally, it was complete. The End.

Below: There were smiles wherever you looked at Lode Lane last month

Bottom: Says it all...

take time to develop a Defender for the 21st Century." It cannot be clearer, therefore, that there will be another Defender, but it didn't sound like it would be any time soon.

Not much work occurred at Lode Lane on that day last month. While the robots presumably continued construction of JLR's future, and highly profitable, Range Rover, Sport and shiny new Jaguar F-Paces, the 700 or so workers who have been producing Defenders were all in the leaky old factory unit to enjoy the final ceremony. If Dr Speth's speech had the gloss and power of a professional global CEO, it was down to an actual member of the workforce, introduced as Nigel, who has been on the Land Rover line since 1968 to really underline that perhaps this is more than just the end of a model range. He spoke of numerous examples of generations of families who had worked on the line; people like the Martin family who could trace their involvement back to a great grandfather. Impressive, and you wondered if that would ever be repeated. It took just over 500 people working on the line to physically build Defenders, with another 150 or so involved in the paint shop, trim and completion. It is to JLR's credit that despite the line being closed, not a single person is losing their job. A mere handful will be taking retirement; Nobby Clark was introduced as one, after 26 years on the Defender. But he wasn't the only one smiling. Considering that one major Japanese manufacturer has built four times as many SUVs since 1986 alone up in the north east of England, as Lode Lane has built Land Rovers, yet you suspect the spirit on the factory floor there is very different. Perhaps it was the hand-built nature of the job, the tactile character of production - time-consuming, uneconomic, dated it might have been but that's what made it unique.

The Land Rover Defender hasn't ceased production because no-one wants to buy them anymore, but because that production process does not meet the company's balance sheet and profit projections, and because the vehicle doesn't meet the new emissions and safety requirements of a 21st century world. Now the

company will have to build something that is efficient, comfortable and, dare we say it, which maybe won't leak like the factory it was built in.

On a personal level, I have to admit to not having a Series I Land Rover in my 'must-have-one-day' dream garage. Having been lucky enough to have joined the British team on the 1988 Camel Trophy and 'lived' in a 110 in Sulawesi for three amazing weeks, the model has always had my respect, if not my heart. For perhaps the first time in what seems a very long motoring career, I understand what the words 'Land Rover' actually mean to so many, and I was pleased to be at Lode Lane to witness a significant motoring milestone, the like of which will probably never occur again. As Dr Ralf Speth insisted, there will be another Defender, and there will indeed be other vehicles that bear the Land Rover badge. There won't, however, be another Land Rover like chassis number 2016933. **4x4**



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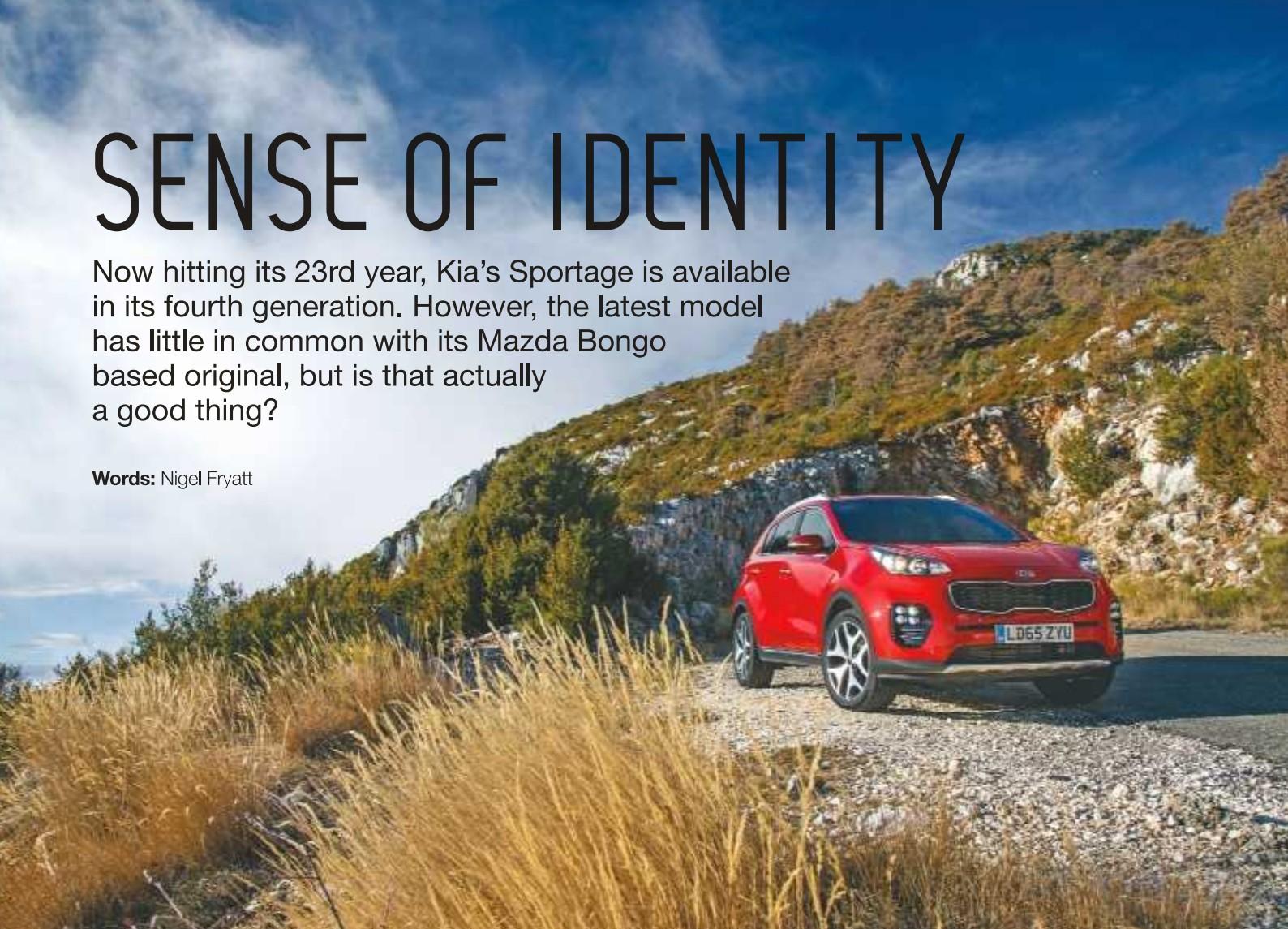


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SENSE OF IDENTITY

Now hitting its 23rd year, Kia's Sportage is available in its fourth generation. However, the latest model has little in common with its Mazda Bongo based original, but is that actually a good thing?

Words: Nigel Fryatt



Kia's fourth generation Sportage hits the roads this year, and it is without doubt a sophisticated, high quality, well-built SUV. Smart, good-looking and with Kia's well-established seven-year warranty cover, it is cleverly targeted at its market. It has also changed an awful lot from that first version, back in 1993.

Taking a look at the four generations of Sportage, it's difficult to see how we get from the boxy, van-like first model to the latest offering, especially the sporty GT-Line version. That first model was built in collaboration with Mazda, and built on the same platform of that company's Bongo range (surely one of the daftest ever vehicle names!). Despite that seemingly unconvincing beginning, it won its class in our 1995 4x4 Of The Year due to its competitive pricing and its competent off-road abilities. Financial difficulties for Kia a few years later actually saw the association with Mazda dropped, while fellow South Korean manufacturer Hyundai stepped in to support Kia, and continue as a joint enterprise. When the second generation Sportage arrived in 2004, it was no surprise that it was built on the Hyundai platform. It gained a significantly different bodyshape, one that has proved very popular, and thanks to still having a modicum of off-road abilities, it snapped up our Budget SUV class in that year's 4x4 Of The Year. These models still hold their own second-hand, the actual shape and versatility of the Sportage having built a strong following. It was a long way from the Bongo, and a lot better.

The third generation arrived in 2010 and was a further significant step, and one that many other SUV manufacturers have followed. SUVs, or crossovers as some insist on calling them, have become the must-have model in the model ranges of the majority of motor manufacturers. A new body shape also covered a model that was considerably more refined; specification lists got longer, bells and whistles were added. For us, the disappointing part was that the Sportage took a step away from the rough stuff, and while there remained models in the extended range that kept four-wheel drive, like so many other SUVs today, it's an additional listed option these days, along with extras like leather seats, climate control and increased driver 'connectivity'. Again Kia had its market

research spot on, and 2015 was a record sales year for the Sportage, with the UK being Kia's fourth biggest global market.

By now, you would expect that a fourth generation model should be able to stake its own true Kia identity. The company's finances have stabilised with sales success, but the SUV market is now more competitive than ever before. Will this latest Sportage have enough individuality to drive new owners into UK showrooms – in a dealership network that is being increased from 188 to 200 - in the coming months?

Once again, this Sportage is based on the equivalent Hyundai platform used by the Tucson, but has been re-engineered. The Sportage has a 30mm longer wheelbase than the Tucson, but the same track, so obviously



The First Edition is the top spec new Sportage - available for a limited time. The GT-Line (top) is our choice

FIRST DRIVE

Kia Sportage



Far left: The First Edition option is well equipped, although we didn't personally like the beige trim colour scheme

Left: The GT-Line version, however, was much more our style and the better option for this writer

will be all but identical in size to its parent company's model. A quick glance between the new model and its third generation sister and perhaps you could just think it's merely a case of a new grille, fancy wheels and some trim tweaking. That would be a mistake as the body, while keeping a family resemblance to the previous model, is all new. The full model range is actually 18 vehicles, both two and four-wheel drive, four engine options, three gearbox options and no less than six different trim levels; that covers a lot of bases.

While I don't know the average length of dealer 'test drives', you suspect that they are not that long. First impressions are all-important and certainly the new Kia Sportage will quickly win over potential new owners. It is very sophisticated, obviously well built, comfortable, and from both the petrol and diesel versions we drove, very quiet – the claimed improvement of the vehicle's NVH levels (Noise, Vibration and Harshness) is noticeable. The engine option split of the previous models has seen 84/16 per cent in favour of diesel power. The engine options are similar to the last generation but are said to have been 'extensively revised' to meet the latest EU6 emissions regulations, which has lowered the CO₂ figures and improved fuel economy. The range is extended, however, with the addition of the new 1.6-litre T-GDI turbocharged petrol unit. While the recent emissions controversy was not attributed in any way towards Kia, it seems likely that some people will now reconsider buying a 'dirty'

diesel-engined car, regardless of the bonnet badge, and so having a new petrol engine could prove a very good move. Indeed, Kia do expect that the 84/16, diesel/petrol, split could well change. This latest turbocharged petrol engine is fitted to the new GT-Line model, as the title suggests, this is the 'sporty' version of the Sportage.

We drove the GT-Line version on rather restricted congested urban roads and were surprised that the model had as much as 174bhp under the bonnet as it didn't feel that powerful. It is, nevertheless, a very smooth and responsive unit and our version was the six-speed manual, which had an excellent gearbox. A few trim tweaks and the seemingly 'compulsory' exposed stitching of the upholstery, underline the GT-Line's sporty pretensions, but then, of course, Kia is not presenting this as any sort of 'boy racer' model, it just allows that little extra individuality that will appeal to some. Should petrol prices remain low, and clouds remain over diesel engine vehicles and their emission concerns, we can see this model being very popular. It has a comfortable ride, but is not sloppy, it has responsive and nicely weighted steering, all of which lead to a pleasant driving experience.

The 'base' Sportage offers the previous 1.6-litre petrol engine, but that's merely for 2WD, after that the diesel options are the 1.7-litre CRDi (114bhp, 280Nm) and the 2.0-litre (182bhp, 400Nm). As you would expect given the different power figures, these two vehicles do have different characteristics. The AWD models in the range are designated

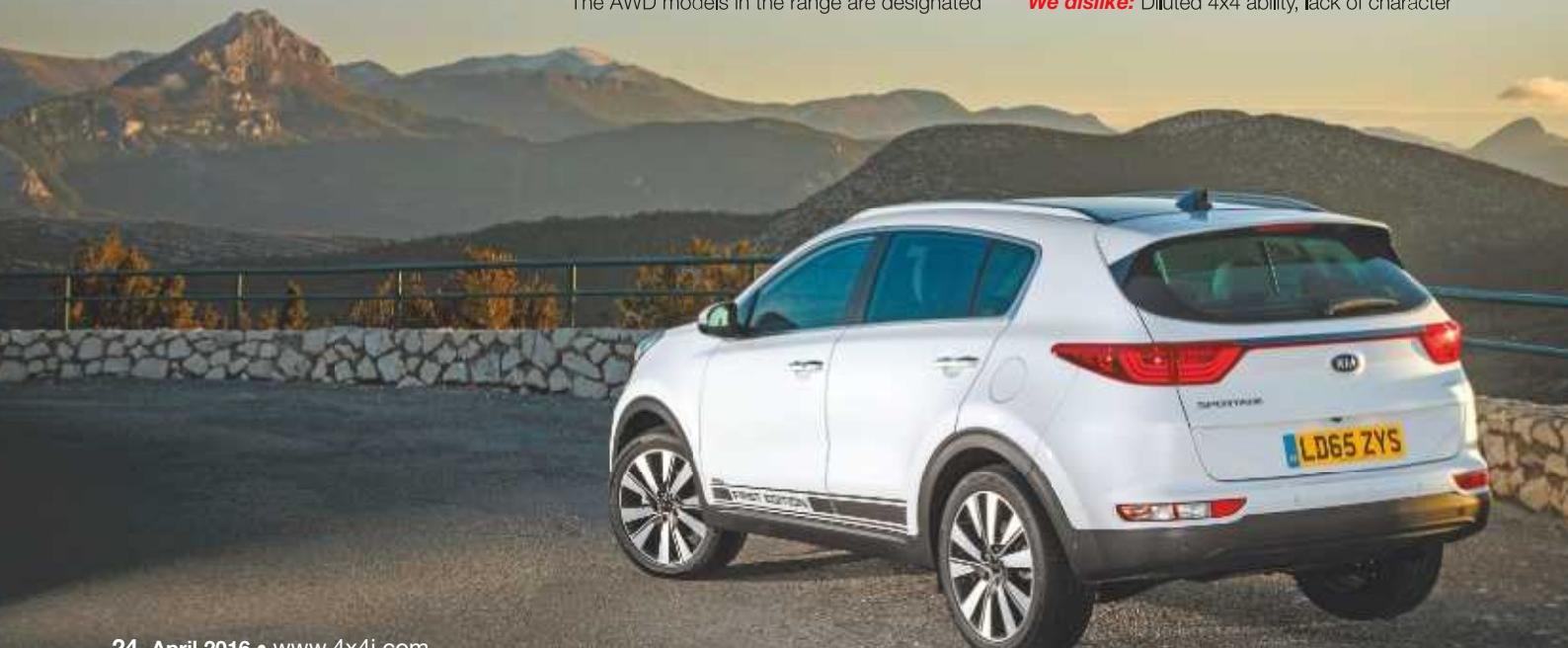
KX-1, KX-2, KX-3, KX-4 and for the launch period, the First Edition trim options.

The First Edition is effectively the top of the range Sportage but will only be available for an initial period – unless demand means it worth continuing. In its six-speed automatic option, it does everything well, but didn't light this writer's fire. Sadly for us four-wheel drive enthusiasts, while these SUVs are becoming more and more refined, they are losing any character, any identity that differentiates one SUV from another. The intelligent 4x4 system is standard on the 1.6-litre GT-Line and 2.0-litre CRDi models. On dry tarmac, drive is 100 per cent to the front wheels, changing up to a 60:40 split when traction conditions demand. It is possible to lock the system to a 50:50 ratio for off-road driving (to speeds up to 25mph) and this will certainly aid any problems from extreme weather, or pulling a caravan from a damp, slippery campsite. Indeed, the 2.0-litre CRDi model has a good towing capacity of 2200kg, in manual form, 1900kg for the automatic.

Prices for the budget AWD KX-1 model start at £21,995, rising to £31,495 for the First Edition. Our preferred option, the 1.6-litre GT-Line manual, splits these at £24,350. Good pricing, good specification, refined, together with that peace of mind seven year warranty on offer means that the fourth generation can join the plethora of similar SUVs on the market with some confidence, if sadly, with a little less character than the original versions. **NF**

We like: Refinement, specification and sporting GT-Line versions

We dislike: Diluted 4x4 ability, lack of character



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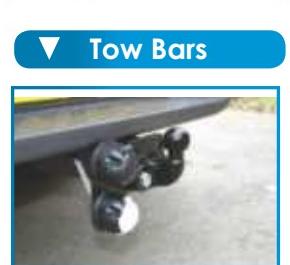


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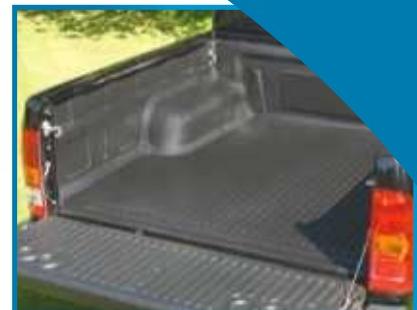
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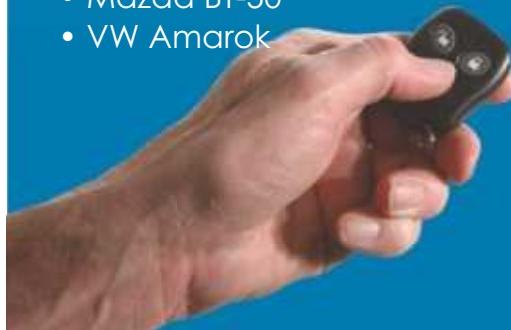
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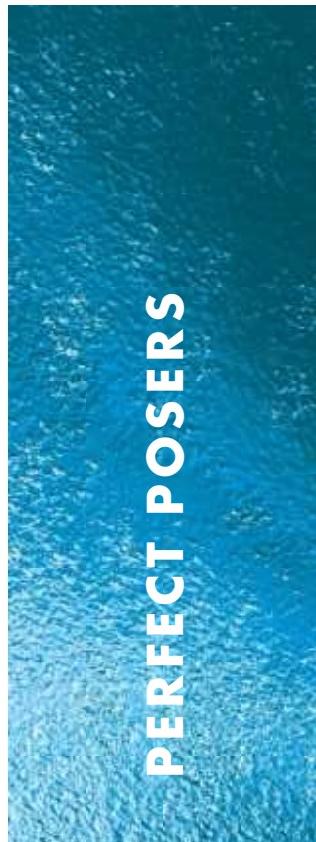
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ON THE EDGE

TAKE YOUR CHOICE

The popularity of four-wheel drives just continues to grow, with more people than ever choosing an off-roader over a conventional road car. If you're of like mind but unsure of which of the many 4x4s is the right one for you, this guide might help. Maybe you are looking to upgrade, or pick up a more off-road capable machine...

There is definitely something about owning a 4x4 that lifts the spirits, whether it's got to do with a yen for an adventurous lifestyle, a genuine desire to keep mobile through difficult or wintry terrain or simply a feeling of superiority engendered by the high driving position and all-embracing opulence of a luxury estate. The only problem facing anyone picking a 4x4 for the first time is the sheer amount of choice - every car manufacturer worth its salt has a

range of 4x4 vehicles on offer, but the 4x4 tag is applied to cars of such different levels of capability that you really need to think twice before buying a car on its looks or its badge alone. First consideration is what use the car will be put to - for instance, if you want to do some serious off-roading you'll be looking for a car with low range gearing and the potential to be modified for extreme 4x4 action; if you want a capable family SUV for mainly urban use you may not wish to get straight into the

biggest, boldest off-roader you can find, and if your preference is for luxury and road presence you might as well aim high. Our guide offers considered suggestions in all these fields, looking at what you can get in the way of a good nearly new deal, a worthy older model or a budget buy that should still give satisfaction. And, just in case you're feeling a bit more adventurous, we've added a few less obvious choices, one of which could just turn out to be your dream first 4x4.





JEEP WRANGLER

Now that the Land Rover Defender is out of production, the Wrangler is probably the only vehicle still made that's truly hard-core off-roadable straight out of the showroom; with the added advantage that a whole range of modifications is readily available to increase its ride height and allow it to run bigger, more aggressive tyres. What makes it a natural off-roader is that it has rigid live axles front and rear, coil sprung not so much for ride comfort but to allow above-average axle articulation. It's solidly built to take off-road punishment, so it's not going to feel like an everyday family estate to drive, a good reason to take a long test drive before deciding you really have the muscle to live with one. Having said that, it's nothing like as agricultural as a Defender, with good performance, good road

behaviour and remarkably good front seat comfort. The Wrangler comes in long and short wheelbase form, the three-door naturally more nimble off-road, though it's seriously short of luggage space, and rear passenger space is a little cramped and awkward to get into. Short wheelbase versions include the base Sport, which would be a good option if you're more interested in off-road fun than modern SUV comforts and equipment, consider it as a two-seater with the rear passenger space more usually serving to stack camping and recovery gear. Equipment may be sparse even in five-door examples, but many will have options such as a premium stereo, and even a locking rear differential. The Sahara has more luxury, including power windows and a seven-speaker Infinity sound system, while the Overland has all

the leather-upholstered comforts of a premium SUV with only its heavy-duty ride and traditional hard-core interior to remind you that it's a mudplugger at heart. The Unlimited badge doesn't mean they're any better off-road; they just pack more convenience and electronic gimmickry. Later models have electronic stability controls, traction control, trailer sway control and hill descent control. Most used examples will have the 2.8 CRD turbodiesel, powerful and reasonably refined, with good low-rev torque. The version of choice if you have some serious rock crawling in mind is the petrol V6 Rubicon, which has more than cosmetic enhancements - it has tougher axles with locking differentials, an enhanced 4x4 system with lower ratio differentials and push-button front sway bar disconnects; note that earlier

versions have an old-school 3.8-litre V6 with 196bhp, after 2012 the newer Pentastar 3.6-litre engine was fitted, with a much livelier 280bhp.

Most will have automatic transmission, early examples a four-speeder, after 2011 a five-speed was fitted; some will have the six-speed manual. Four-wheel drive in either case is selectable, the automatics using the Selec-Track system, which includes a permanent 4x4 setting allowing four-wheel drive to be used in normal on-tarmac driving. The current range has the Sahara as the base model with a new list price of £30,225 for the 2.8 CRD 3-door, the Rubicon is £31,140, the Overland £32,375 and the range-topping X Edition is £35,150.

It seems the Wrangler has caught the imagination of high society swingers, so you could pay close on £80,000 for a 425bhp supercharged Deranged version with Nappa leather seats, 20-inch black satin alloys and premium Alpine sound system, however if you are willing to pay over the top for a modified car it ought to be one with upgrades more suited to off-roading, like the three-door Sahara in hydro blue metallic asking £34,995 in a private sale with a 2.5-inch Old Man Emu suspension lift, 17-inch Rockwell alloys with Mickey Thompson MTZ tyres, winch bumper with a nine tonne Comeup winch and HD rear bumper with spare wheel carrier, call 01482 535590 in case it's still for sale. If you prefer to stay unmodified Roger Young of Saltash (01752 948756) had a white 2015 Rubicon with less than 600 miles on offer at £28,995. An older 2014 Sahara with less than 10,000 miles shouldn't cost more than £25,000, while an early Sport will command £10,000 in tip-top condition.

LAND ROVER DISCOVERY



No matter that the Discovery was conceived as a luxurious town car, no matter that it quickly developed something of a reputation for unreliability. For off-road enthusiasts the core value of the Discovery is that underneath the stylish body it combines the terrain conquering mechanicals of the Defender and Range Rover, making it (potentially) one of the most competent hard-core off-road vehicles of them all. 'Potentially' because in its standard form it runs on small wheels and has only moderate ground clearance, but it doesn't have to stay that way, because there is an expansive network of Land Rover spares, repairs and modification specialists all over the country eager to provide suspension and transmission modifications to give your urban limousine the stonking off-road ability it needs to match its adventurous looks.

Unreliable? Maybe, but not enough so to prevent it from developing into one of the most popular SUVs of its age, with the pace, build quality and sheer street cred to match anything any other manufacturer has to

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offer in its class. Here, however, we're not talking Discovery 3 or 4, these are just too sophisticated with their all-independent suspension and electronic driving aids to pass muster as true hard-core off-roaders, regardless of what the salesmen say; an early Disco with a two or three-inch suspension lift and 32-inch tyres, with the excellent articulation of its rigid axles and an ARB or Ashcroft locking rear differential, would walk all over them. That is, assuming it has the centre diff lock, which was deleted with the introduction of traction control in the Discovery 2. Fortunately early examples of the Discovery 2 had the centre lock, all it needs is the linkage to make it work, and the full system was reinstated during 2003, just in time for the launch of the Discovery 3. If buying a Discovery 2 dating from around 2001-2003 check that it has the centre diff lock, if not argue £500 off the price and fit the

mechanism yourself. Which engine? The early 3.5 V8 was quickly upgraded to the 3.9, the later 4.0 is a more powerful unit with more low-rev torque and ideal for highly technical off-roading manoeuvres. The turbodiesel choice is between the 300Tdi and the later TD5, this five-cylinder engine had more power and torque but aficionados prefer the 300Tdi for its simplicity and reliability. Note that many earlier cars may well have had engine transplants, if what you're after is an off-road plaything and the price is right it doesn't really matter what engine it is. Having said that, there was also a four-cylinder 2.0-litre petrol version, it wasn't popular and isn't the strongest engine for off-roading purposes, especially if you're planning to run taller tyres. Buy one only if it's cheap and the chassis is sound and if you have the money or muscle to perform an engine transplant. The



Discovery 2 was a somewhat softened version of the original, but the 4x4 works are the same, the main problem from an off-road point of view is that the body was lengthened to give more rear legroom, with the result that there's more rear overhang. As a result the 'bobtail' modification is popular among off-road enthusiasts, if you're not up to shaving a foot off the back of the car yourself consider buying one that's already been done, just satisfy yourself that it's been done properly - if you're quick you might be in time to buy the one being offered by Brandon Motors of

Kinglassie, Fife (01592 882105) for £1495, a '97 TD5 ES with a body and suspension lift and 265/75x16 mud tyres. Otherwise for its classic value alone the 2003 TD5 ES seven-seater with only 26,000 miles on it, metallic Bonetti Grey with black leather interior, twin sunroofs and full service history is probably well worth the £11,000 being asked by Arun Specialist Car Sales of Pulborough (01798 874477). However, £5000 would be a more reasonable price for a higher mileage car, still in good shape, we've seen a big choice dating anywhere between 1994 and 2003 at that price.

SUZUKI GRAND VITARA

This isn't our budget choice just because it's small, it's because it's an unexpectedly good off-roader. We were surprised when it was launched back in 1998 to find that the Grand Vitara had a separate ladder-frame chassis, making it quite heavy for a car of its size and unnecessary for what we assumed was meant to be a grown-up urbanised version of the Vitara. Not only that, the Grand Vitara has low range gearing, in fact the only sop to city driving being the adoption of independent front suspension. What it means is that 15 years on an old Grand Vitara makes an excellent high-fun off-road plaything, well suited to the needs of a beginner learning off-road techniques. First versions were five-door estates with lively 2.5 V6 power, the turbodiesel that arrived a short while later was a 2.0-litre 85bhp Mazda unit that we considered too dull and unrefined, avoid this if you can and if you must have a diesel go for a post-2001 version which has the much more refined and gutsy 107 horse Peugeot engine, still on the plodding side but good as an off-road power plant because it has stronger low-rev torque. For us, though, the GV2000 Soft Top is the funster of choice, not just because

of the cute open-top looks but because the short wheelbase makes it significantly more nimble in tortuous terrain. The only snag is that the fabric convertible roof is fiddly to remove and even more awkward to replace, it's a job that demands at least two sets of hands. The front compartment is covered by a fabric fold-back roof, which is much easier to operate. Power is from a 2.0-litre petrol engine, smoother than the turbodiesel and offering more acceptable on-road performance, pick the manual transmission for better fine control in off-road conditions. The Grand Vitara always seemed like good value, being priced to undercut perceived rivals like the Toyota RAV4, Honda HR-V and Land Rover Freelander, and the five-door versions were always well equipped, featuring CD player, electric windows, central locking, powered mirrors and an adjustable steering wheel, but there was a cheap and cheerful plasticky feel to the interior that justified the lower price. Look out for examples that had air-conditioning and antilock brakes, which were optional.

You could be asked to pay up to £4000 for a run-out first-generation car dating from 2005, but at that price it ought to be a



well-maintained example, for instance the one lady owner 62,000-mile TD SE 3-door, MOT to January 2017, on offer at £3990 at Lakeview Cars of Biggleswade (01480 576816), but you probably wouldn't want to trash that off road. Spend less than £1000 and you could still get a clean good runner dating from 2002 or 2003, though most convertibles we saw were asking over £2000. A possibly excellent purchase we spotted was the W-reg GV2000 Soft Top going for just £850 - 'possibly' because it is a Category C insurance write-off, which although it has been repaired, could be difficult to insure. However, it could be ideal as a car for conversion into a dedicated off-roader. It was being offered as a private sale, call 01502 392133 in case it's still available.

In standard form a Grand Vitara

is quite capable enough to provide an enjoyable off-road experience for a beginner, but once the off-road bug bites you'll be looking for more demanding obstacles to conquer, which might require a few enhancements. Fortunately it's quite easy to upgrade a Grand Vitara, suspension kits are available to give a three inch lift, allowing taller tyres to be fitted; one of the snags with independent front suspension setups is that lifting the suspension leaves the driveshafts working at an awkward angle, but Jimnybits - check their website for details - provide relocation brackets for the front differential to relieve this problem. The company can also provide an automatic locking rear differential and even a hidden winch mounting plate for the Grand Vitara, along with a range of cost-effective off-road tyre options.

SKODA YETI

This could be an ideal first SUV, mainly because its compact dimensions and taut suspension means it feels and handles like a more conventional road car, so for instance it doesn't lean excessively in fast corners, something that hardened off-road enthusiasts are accustomed to, but which can feel alarming to a first-timer. However, the Yeti also has distinctively different styling, totally practical with it, so you still have the feeling that you're part of the 4x4 lifestyle - more so, in fact, than the many who have fallen for the jelly-mould blandness of the modern Qashqai/RAV4/Honda CR-V brigade. The Yeti has the feel of a nimble compact but it is a roomy five-seater five-door estate, one of the key interior features being the way the rear passenger accommodation can be adjusted to give 20 different configurations including the removal of all the rear seats to give van-like carrying capacity.

The Yeti appealed to us from the start, enough to win it top spot in the SUV class in our 2012 4x4 Of The Year competition for its combination of keen pricing, the promise of legendary reliability and impressive practicality. Do be sure you're buying a four-wheel drive version, because most will be front-drive only; for 2014 the range was split into the urban Yeti and more adventurous Yeti Outdoor with more rugged front bumper treatment, but even picking an Outdoor doesn't guarantee that you get four-wheel drive.

Where four-wheel drive is fitted, the Yeti uses the popular auto-engaging Haldex system which means the front wheels are driven most of the time, the Haldex clutch adding drive to the rear wheels in a fraction of a second if either or both of the front wheels lose traction. Higher-specification versions have an 'off-road' button that allows more adventurous progress off-road by switching in hill descent control, off-road traction control and hill start assist. The 'off-road' button was a £95 option on S and SE versions, and it's also worth looking out for examples fitted with the dealer-option 'rough road' pack which includes a thermoplastic tray to protect the engine and transmission, a plastic cover for the fuel and brake lines and a reinforced parking brake cable.

Four-wheel drive versions of the Yeti originally had a choice of 1.8-litre turbocharged petrol engine developing a lively 157bhp or a 2.0-litre turbodiesel in



110, 140 or 170bhp form. Often when faced with a choice of engine power output it's a case of balancing fuel economy against performance, but the easier power of the 170bhp turbodiesel makes it more economical than the less powerful engines. From 2011 the higher-power turbodiesels were dropped and replaced by a 148bhp unit, and the high-specification Laurin & Klement could be specified with the 1.4 TSi petrol engine. The transmission of choice is the six-speed manual, many users say the optional seven-speed DSG automatic has some annoying traits, such as not taking up drive as quickly as it should, and being difficult to manage in reverse.

All 4x4 versions are well equipped, the SE boasting privacy glass, traction control, cruise control, headlamp washers, dual zone air conditioning with a cool box in the glove compartment and 17-inch alloys. The Elegance has Bluetooth preparation, auto-dimming rear view mirror and rain sensor, bi-xenon headlamps, front fog lamps and full leather upholstery, options worth looking for are the satnav and the panoramic sunroof. Top-specification versions also have Park Assist – optional on other trim levels, so look out for examples fitted with it, it's the clever system that identifies a suitable gap among parked cars and inserts the Yeti with minimal input from the driver. £5000 should suffice to acquire a 2010 Elegance in good condition, though almost certainly with more than 100,000 miles, expect to pay £15,000 for a nearly new 2015 SE with 15,000 miles, a keen offer we spotted was the £23,995 being asked for a 148bhp Laurin & Klement with just 100 miles on it at Des Winks Skoda, Scarborough (01723 580050), more than £3000 under the normal list price.

NISSAN X-TRAIL



Here's a car that represents the peak of mainstream SUV design, which leaves enthusiasts like us baffled as to why the X-Trail suddenly took a dive during 2014 into the mediocre world of lookalike big hatchbacks. The second-generation X-Trail launched in 2007 built on a winning formula of a comfortable five-seater family estate with a competent four-wheel drive system and estate styling with good-looking conventional 4x4 cues giving it eye-catching street cred, the perfect choice for the first-timer wanting a taste of a more traditional 4x4 experience. There's no question about the utility aspect of this model, the cargo area not only achieves van-like capacity with the rear seats folded flat, but the normal luggage area is vast and has a double deck arrangement with space for a sliding drawer under the floor where valuable items can be stored away from prying eyes.

There's a good choice of power plants, though the 2.0-litre petrol engine works hard so we'd prefer the 2.5-litre alternative, which is refined and powerful. The diesels were more popular and are more numerous second-hand, note that there are two versions of the 2.0-litre dCi turbodiesel, tuned for 148bhp or 171bhp; the lower-power unit was fitted to the entry-level Trek, but either could be specified with Sport and Aventura trim levels so check that you're getting the higher performance engine. All models have Nissan's All-Mode 4x4 system, which bucks the trend to make the application of four-wheel drive a matter that no longer calls for input from





the driver. A rotary knob on the dash gives a choice of front-wheel drive, or automatic four-wheel drive with a variable torque split between the front and rear axles, or full-on four-wheel drive with the centre differential locked when tackling more tortuous terrain. The automatic setting is also useful for on-road driving in that it reduces understeer and helps to maintain stability when encountering wet or icy patches. The Sport and Aventura go a stage further with the All-Mode 4x4-i, which includes hill descent control and hill start assist. Most have six-speed manual transmission, the automatic is a CVT type, which takes a bit of getting used to, but is quite responsive and economical.

Buying an older model doesn't mean missing out on the essential modern communications technology. The Trek is the original base model, though even this has alloy wheels, Bluetooth connectivity and climate control, but the higher-specification Sport and Aventura are better value second-hand; these could also have the Extreme upgrade of roof rails with integrated spotlamps, and the Explorer or Expedition packs which added DVD satnav with voice recognition, rear parking camera and xenon headlamps; these proved popular because the pack cost £1000 for equipment that would normally have asked £1700.

In 2009 the petrol engines were dropped and the trim designations changed to Acenta as the entry-level version boasting a six-CD player, cruise control and panoramic sunroof, and the high-specification Tekna which adds leather, powered and heated seats, DVD satnav, a rear parking camera, xenon headlights and a nine-speaker BOSE sound system. This presaged a facelift for 2010 which involved neater frontal styling and brighter LED brake lights, new 18-inch alloys for the Tekna and uprated interior fabrics, more importantly a new manual gearbox with ratios revised to improve fuel consumption. An early Trek in good condition will cost around £5000 but with well over 100,000 miles, but there are many Aventuras of that age for not much more, though low-mileage examples command significantly higher prices; one keen offer we spotted was the silver 2008 2.5i Aventura with the Explorer pack, only 57,000 miles with a dealer warranty and a long MOT, priced at £8288 at Glenfield of Kilmarnock (01563 532100).

Better value would seem to be cars about five-years old, expect to pay £9000 for a 2011 Acenta with under 100,000 miles, we'd be tempted by the 2011 2.0 dCi Tekna with 80,000 miles, a one-owner car with a new MOT, going for £10,990 at DJ Autos of Wigan (01942 392608).

HONDA CR-V

Many manufacturers claim to have fired public enthusiasm for SUVs - but the CR-V wasn't one of them. We can't help feeling that Honda hurried the original CR-V into production as a spoiler to the Land Rover Freelander that was launched six months later, but it didn't work. The Land Rover hit the big time, even though ultimately - in its first generation - it proved less reliable. It boiled down to image - the Freelander looked the part, the original CR-V was too blandly styled and lacked the off-road credibility to go with the off-road gimmickry like the picnic table boot tray and the built-in shower. So why would we suggest one as a worthy first-time SUV? Mainly because the second-generation launched in 2002 was a more stylish affair, and although it still doesn't have much off-road credibility it has an excellent reputation for reliability, a comfortable five-seater interior and a practical load space; like the Skoda Yeti this CR-V is a good car to drive, nippy with excellent road manners and enough genuine SUV style - even down to the spare wheel mounted on the rear door - to ease you into the 4x4 revolution without too much shock to the system.

In practical terms the CR-V is a good choice because it has one of the most spacious cabins in its class, as well as having a 60/40-split rear bench which has fore-aft movement to alter the share of rear legroom and luggage space. These seats tumble forwards to form a near-vertical platform with enough room to fit two mountain bikes upright without having to remove their front wheels. Access to the boot is via a two-part tailgate with a separate upper glass hatch, which can be opened separately from the door. The outdoorsy elements were retained, in the form of a waterproof storage bin under the load floor useful for muddy wellies or wet swimming gear, and the lid can be used as a picnic table.

It's fair to say that one reason the original CR-V didn't sell in huge

numbers is that it didn't have a diesel-powered option. This was still true of the first of the second generation cars, which are powered by a 2.0-litre VTEC engine with variable valve timing and a lusty 150 horsepower; mated to the five-speed manual transmission it's good for lively 10-second 0-60mph acceleration and should return about 30mpg. Some will have the four-speed automatic, which does sap performance; so make sure you do a long test drive if you feel you prefer the automatic to make sure you can live with it. A turbodiesel eventually appeared in 2005, a common-rail 2.2-litre unit, which was considered one of the most refined available at the time. It's not as powerful as the petrol engine, but you'd hardly know it because the strong low-down torque gives excellent mid-range acceleration for easy overtaking, and the bonus is fuel consumption of around 45mpg.

There are three trim levels, SE, SE Sport and SE Executive. All variants are equipped with air conditioning, front and side airbags, a stereo with CD player, electrically adjustable heated door mirrors, remote central locking and electric windows. The SE Sport trim adds alloy wheels, climate controlled air-con, a sunroof and a hard spare wheel cover, while the SE Executive packs more luxury including satnav, electric sunroof and leather upholstery.

You won't have to part with more than £1000 to secure an early example even of a higher-specification model, it will be petrol-powered and probably with a high mileage; when buying an older car check that the engine's cam belt has been changed on schedule. For a turbodiesel you'll be looking at a good £2000 for a 2005 model, but at that price it will have well over 100,000 miles; for anything significantly under that mileage you'll probably need closer to £5000, one of the better offers we spotted at that price was the smart black 2006 SE Executive 80,000-miler with full service history, long MOT and a three-month warranty at Kwanza of Greenford (07555 351898).



RANGE ROVER SPORT



If you're after a 4x4 simply to show off in it, nothing does it better than a Range Rover Sport. Apart, perhaps, from a Range Rover Autobiography, which at over £100,000 has the opulence and sheer size to impress any lesser being, but the Sport is just that little bit lighter and nimbler and if you want to drive the car yourself rather than relax in the back with the FT while your chauffeur does the business, it has to be the Sport. That, anyway, is the conclusion we came to in our 4x4 Of The Year competition (see the Winter 2016 issue) where the Sport outclassed its senior stablemate by two percentage points to win the luxury class.

For a start the Range Rover Sport simply looks stunning, having captured many of the styling cues that made the original Range Rover an icon of automobile artistry and morphed them seamlessly into a modern evocation of speed and performance. It's also carried on that endearing Land Rover philosophy that their products have to be "proper" 4x4s, with true off-road ability. Forget that for the moment, because you're unlikely to be buying one to trash on weekend pay and play days, and you'll quickly discover that off-road is not what this car is all about. It is packed with the latest dynamic driving aids; even with the relatively mild 300bhp 3.0-litre turbodiesel it's a superb high-performance road car. Features include Dynamic Response, Adaptive Dynamics, Torque Vectoring and Cornering Brake Control, but what it means in

practice is that the Sport rides flat and level in fast corners, and you have to try hard to make it step out of line because the electronics take control to keep the car on track and keep the steering delightfully precise. Seated in the beautifully crafted stitched leather seats in a cockpit evoking an impression of relaxed opulence, flooring the throttle and allowing the eight-speed automatic to whirr its way almost silently and seamlessly through the gears sees the surroundings rushing by like the background in a car-chase video game, while steering through bends has a touch of that same detached feeling. Just a touch; the steering retains responsive feel, and although the suspension is remarkably comfortable there's just enough feedback to let you know you're enjoying the drive. And okay, let's assume that you are going to do some gentle off-roading. Here again the Range Rovers will

outclass any other luxury pretender, even though most have copied the terrain response systems pioneered by Land Rover; they've copied them because they work. It's all automatic in the current Range Rover Sport, and it pretty much allows you to point the car anywhere you want it to go and just let it get on with it. The latest electronic trick is possibly the cutest of them all - Terrain Progression Control, which lets you set the required speed, up to 20mph, and the car will continue up steep hills, down steep declines, over boulders and through rivers, at exactly the speed you've set, all you have to do is steer.

As far as showing off is concerned, probably the only thing you won't be able to do with the 3.0 SDV6 Sport is smoke the tyres on a quick getaway, because the four-wheel drive system is permanent and the traction and stability controls are class-leading in preventing wheelspin. Since you won't be sparing any expense in aiming for this level of automotive luxury, you might well consider opting for the top-specification Autobiography which can have the 340bhp 4.4 V8 or, why not, the 5.0 V8. Even with its 550bhp you might not be able to smoke the tyres, but you could have an awful lot of fun trying. Good news is that you don't have to pay the full new car price - just as well, because the list price could quickly be elevated to dizzy heights by the extras. Rather pick a nearly-new example, like the 3000-mile 5.0-litre 2015 Autobiography with extras that put its new price up to £118,000, being offered by London and Surrey Cars (020 8549 7000) for a mere £84,995.



VOLKSWAGEN TOUAREG

For many, the Volkswagen brand means the sort of quality that should be reflected in a luxury car, so there was joy when the Touareg burst into the world of the luxury SUV with a bang and a mighty roar from a stonking V10 turbodiesel power pack, an engine that stirred us to write: "Never have we driven a diesel with as much performance as this. It's the most powerful passenger car diesel in the world,

and definitely the most fun." The V10 packs over 550lb.ft of torque, enough to accelerate to 60mph in 7.5 seconds and reach a 141mph top speed. It returns less than 20mpg, but anyone buying a premium sports car can't be that bothered about fuel consumption. You can buy a well-maintained reasonable mileage early example for around £5000 and there's good reason why we urge you to do so - it's because the big VW SUV is

somewhat short of character, we've more than once described it as a 'swollen Passat', and the V10 is such a magnificent engine that it really doesn't matter what the car looks like.

Obviously our comments about the Touareg's styling is tempered by our preference for cars with true off-road appeal; the Volkswagen is a split-personality car that boasts good off-road capability yet strives to look no more exciting than a large road

car, which is odd in two respects - is it an off-roader or a sports car? It shares much of its basic mechanical structure with the Porsche Cayenne, so as you'd expect it is a good driver's car with lively on road performance and crisp handling. External appearance apart, the Touareg does what's expected of a premium SUV, with comfortable five-seater accommodation in a luxurious cabin, in its high-specification versions boasting

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the full monte of leather-upholstered wood trimmed opulence.

VW realised that it needed a more sensible engine, but we always wondered why they chose to go to the other extreme by fitting a puny 2.5-litre unit, but fortunately the range quickly expanded to include a lustier 3.0-litre turbodiesel and a choice of petrol engines topped by the 4.2-litre V8 with over 300bhp, a smooth and spirited performer compared with the V10, but thirstier. The higher-power versions all have a six-speed automatic transmission, the eminently ignorable 2.5 TDI a six-speed manual.

Four-wheel drive is permanent with low range, using a gear-type differential to share drive equally between front and rear axles, the diff locking automatically if any wheel loses traction, or it can be locked manually - a locking rear

axle differential was an option, so if you're planning to use one as an off-road plaything look for one that had this option installed. All versions have Hill Descent Control and traction and anti-skid features.

A facelift for 2007 saw the engine range reduced to a single 3.6 V6 petrol unit, and introduced a new 3.0-litre turbodiesel, replaced only a year later with a more efficient common-rail unit, when buying a car of around this age make sure you're getting one with the uprated engine. For 2010, the 5.0-litre V10 was replaced by a 4.2-litre V8 TDI with even more power and torque plus better fuel economy, theoretically capable of returning 31 mpg. The off-road cues were toned down, distancing the Touareg so far from its SUV roots that it needed a specific model to recapture some of that character, in the form of the Escape which has a



conventional locking centre differential and a locking rear axle differential as well, which along with variable-height air suspension suits it exceptionally well to off-road use. Other models could be specified with a similar set-up as a 'Terrain Tech' option.

Expect to pay £16,000 for a 2011 3.0 TDV6 in SE trim with under 100,000 miles; Lancaster

Volkswagen (01524 937975) wanted £18,965 for a 75,000 miler in pearlescent Lapiz Blue, you could be asked over £25,000 for a later high-specification model, for instance the 2013 R-Line 45,000-miler with full leather upholstery and panoramic sunroof priced at £26,889 at Motorline Direct of Loughborough (01509 506396).



MERCEDES-BENZ ML

We may not have thought much of the Mercedes off-roader when it first appeared, but that's only because we despaired at its lack of off-road image. Nevertheless, it has proved immensely popular with the many who are more interested in its appeal as an urban SUV and the levels of quality and luxury associated with the Mercedes badge, and with that in mind an early example would make a perfect starting point for a first-timer wishing to dabble in luxury limousine motoring on a budget.

We weren't all that impressed by the interior quality of the earliest M class cars, and decided that it was because the model had been mainly designed to appeal to Americans with expectations that weren't quite as high as in Europe. The quality did improve over the years, but it has its good side in that used examples are almost surprisingly affordable considering the underlying quality of the engineering and the cachet of the three-pointed star.

There's an almost bewildering range of models to choose from, mainly because of the many different engines, some aimed at enhancing performance, others appealing to economy-conscious owners. The first version in the UK in 1998 was the V6 petrol powered ML320, followed a few months later by the 305bhp V8 ML430, both driving through a five-speed automatic. In 2000 we saw the first attempt to improve the quality of the interior trim and fittings though perhaps more significant was the arrival of the turbodiesel ML270CDi, which could also be specified with

a six-speed manual gearbox. For the power hungry, however, this year also saw the launch of the mighty ML55 AMG with over 340 horsepower on tap. That early turbodiesel is hardly a lively performer, so we'd suggest balancing the relatively low purchase price of a 350 V6 - that's 230bhp against the 270 CDI's 160 - against fuel consumption that isn't really that much worse. The 2001 model year saw restyled lights and bumpers, while inside the centre console was tweaked in line with that of the S-class limousine. The air conditioning was uprated to give rear seat passengers their own ventilation controls. At the same time the fact that many customers seemed happy with performance over economy was reflected in the dropping of the ML430 and the introduction of the ML500, which as it happened delivered 20 horsepower more but without much of a consumption disadvantage. At the same time the 3.2-litre V6-powered ML320 was switched for the 3.7-litre ML350.

Quite apart from the choice of engines, what you get in your second-hand ML is whatever the original owner specified, since many items we might now consider to be standard in a luxury car were offered as options, so look for examples with the sunroof, upgraded stereo and navigation

systems. One of the options you may be interested in is the extra row of seats making it a seven-seater, though these do offer very little legroom.

Mercedes did make much of the vehicle's off-road prowess, which is as good as any four-wheel drive system will allow bearing in mind the relatively low ride height which in turn marks the car as a tarmac-burner rather than a mudplugger. The all-independent suspension with torsion-bar springing in front does not allow much articulation and the petrol engines have little to offer in the way of stump-pulling low-rev torque, but accessing low range is a matter of pushing a dash-mounted button, the traction control will help keep it on the move over rough terrain and the hill descent control works well.

Second-hand you do get a lot of car for the money, for instance MN Motors of Birmingham (07443 936310) were asking just £1600 for a metallic blue W-reg ML320 with a long MOT and just over 100,000 miles, Martyns Car Sales of Chertsey (07768 017781) were offering a similar-age ML430, a one lady owner seven-seater with just 84,000 miles, for £3690, while £4000 could get you into a stonking 2002 55 AMG, 120,000 miles but with a full service history, from Dryden of Birmingham (0121 659 7795).

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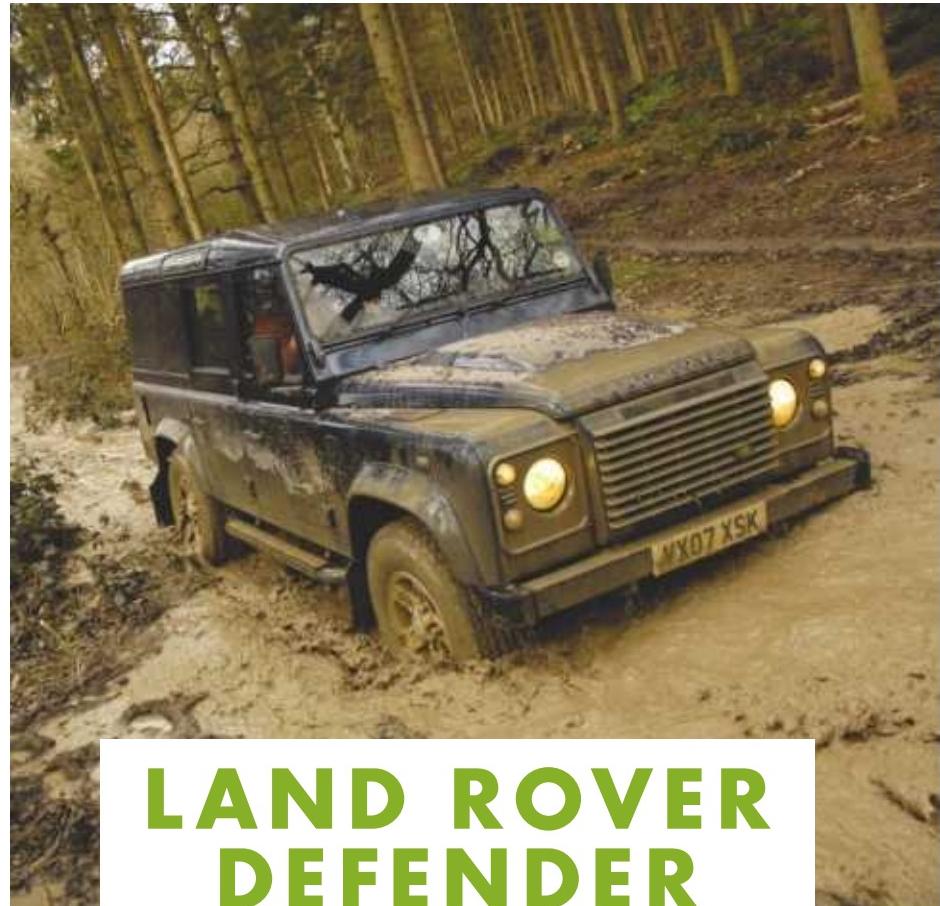
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BUYING USED

Your First 4x4

You might well ask, if the Defender is no longer in production, why would we suggest that you buy one as your first 4x4? There is the cynical argument that if you bought one of the last of these iconic Land Rovers and mothballed it, that it could double in value in five years, but that's not the reason. It's more a question of why you want a 4x4. If it's because you want to learn all there is to know about serious off-road driving, we think it's a good idea - as with any skill - to begin with the basics, and it's all too easy to be lulled into a false sense of security in a modern off-roader with electronic traction and hill descent controls, variable ride heights and paddle-shift automatic transmissions. There's a good reason why the Defender remained in production for as long as it did, why Defenders command seemingly ridiculous prices second-hand, why Defenders and their 110 and 90 forebears are among the most-stolen cars on the British Isles - it's because they are exceptionally good at doing what they do, which is cocking every conceivable snook at any challenge the toughest off-road obstacle can throw at them. However, because they are pretty basic cars, how they achieve that end is still very much up to the skill of the driver, and therefore it's the perfect car in which to learn and hone those skills.

Defenders have in recent years gained some of the electronic aids, in particular traction control, but we'd argue against picking a car with any of these add-ons. In any case, we're not necessarily talking a new car here. The Defender name is 26 years old, the first 90 and 110 versions so called went on sale in 1990, but we're not urging you to buy one that old, either. If you do, expect to pay £4000 or so for a good one, the main points to look for are a sound chassis and bulkhead, these do have a habit of rusting away - do not buy one without a new MOT. Many earlier examples may not have the engines they were assembled with; early models should have the 200Tdi, a noisy engine which may have been replaced by the smoother and



LAND ROVER DEFENDER

more efficient 300Tdi fitted as standard from 1995, many users preferred this engine to the more powerful but electronically-controlled TD5 installed from 1998, while at the same time many may have transplanted a TD5 into an earlier car to gain the extra power and economy of this more efficient unit. A transplant of any sort isn't a bad thing as long as it's been done properly, just be sure you know what you're getting.

We'd suggest looking for a car no earlier than 2007, with the more reliable Ford DuraTorq 2.4TDi engine, which also has a broader spread of low-rev torque, good not only for tread-lightly off-roading but excellent for towing duties. These also have a six-speed gearbox, with a lower first for off-road crawling in low range and a higher top gear for quieter motorway cruising in high

range. From 2012 a cleaner but no more powerful 2.2TDci engine was fitted, also Land Rover reintroduced an open-backed soft-top version, one worth looking out for even if only for its cute looks - one of these was the last car to roll off the production line. Commercial pick-ups and vans are more common second-hand, possibly cheaper but with higher mileage, we'd recommend going for a more neatly trimmed XS or XVS version. Your main consideration will be whether to buy a seriously practical 110, available as a seven-seater, or a more off-road friendly 90. Either way you're looking to pay £12,000 for anything in reasonable shape from 2007, up to £16,000 for a low mileage 2011 model; we were drawn to the 2012 one-owner 90 SVX soft top with full service history at 44,000 miles, sand coloured soft top with matching canvas seat covers, with swing away spare wheel carrier, remote locking with alarm and posy side steps, priced at £22,794 at RCV Land Rovers of Staplehurst (01580 890333).



JEEP CHEROKEE

If this is going to be your first 4x4, why should it not be from the company that produced the first 4x4s? That would be Jeep, and we're not suggesting that you acquire a 1941 original, unless you're into classics and would be happy with a car that you'd only drive at commemorative events like the Normandy landing recreations. For something that's more modern, well equipped, comfortable and still recognisably a Jeep we can do no better than point you to the fourth-generation Cherokee. This wasn't around for long, but impressed us enough to win the SUV class in our 2010

features to look for is the Sky Slider roof which apart from a hefty roll bar over the rear passenger's heads pretty much opens the whole passenger compartment to the elements. It can be opened rearwards from the front or forwards from the back, and it can even be opened or closed on the move at up to 80mph. Satnav is also optional, but it's a hard drive type so can be readily updated, and includes Bluetooth phone connectivity.

From a practicality point of view it's slightly bigger all round than its softer city-car predecessor, so it is a full five seater, with plenty of head and legroom for all in an airy

interior with a dash, door trim and centre console featuring a chunky carved-from-granite look. It has a conveniently large boot, which can be accessed through the glass back window, which opens separately from the hatchback. The rear seats fold right down to give a long flat load floor, and the front passenger seat can also be folded down to provide extended carrying length on that side. The high load floor has an additional storage space underneath, the cover is reversible so can be used to carry wet fishing or swimming gear.

As a sop to on-road driving comfort the front wheels are independently suspended on McPherson struts, but the rear axle remains a rigid type sprung on coils, helping to retain a reasonable level of articulation. The four-wheel drive system is Jeep's Select TrackII, which is basically a permanent system with low range and a lockable centre differential. It has traction control, but with its proper 4x4 system the Cherokee has no need of additional electronic aids such as Hill Descent Control - oh, hang on, you do get this with the automatic transmission which doesn't offer quite the same level of engine braking control.

An early example from 2008 in good condition will cost upwards of £7000, Simon Bennett Cars of Hinckley (07976 934250) had a 75,000-miler with the Sky Slider roof and privacy glass at £7975, T H White of Swindon (01793 937702) had a glossy black 2010 model with matching black alloys and deep-tint sunscreen glass, 49,000 miles, priced at £12,450. **4x4**



4x4 Of The Year competition. It won against the Land Rover Freelander and the Suzuki Grand Vitara because for similar money it was bigger, better-equipped, and more comfortable, quicker and significantly better off road, as well as being a better tow car. Looking back on it now we see it as one of the last of the 'true' Jeeps before Fiat took over and dragged the proud American off-road brand kicking and screaming into the urban mainstream; okay, so it's the only way the Jeep brand is going to survive, but we can allow ourselves a bit of retro satisfaction in recognising that the Cherokee of 2008 was still a very utilitarian SUV which, apart from the admittedly over heavy front wheelarch and bumper treatment, held true to traditional laid-back Jeep styling cues.

Only the one version was offered, the Limited with a 2.8 CRD turbodiesel developing 174bhp mated to a six-speed manual, though many of the first cars into the country were fitted with the optional five-speed automatic. It is luxuriously equipped, and while some of the plastics and fittings may appear a little cheap and cheerful you can't argue with leather upholstery with electrically-adjustable heated seats, automatic air conditioning, cruise control, rain-sensing wipers, parking sensors, tyre pressure monitor and a full complement of airbags, while among the few optional



FEATURE VEHICLE

Wrangler Rubicon



HEART TRANSPLANT

When you have a factory-equipped Jeep Wrangler Rubicon, but want something a little different, there's only one way to go; drop in a 5.7-litre Hemi V8 under the bonnet with 345bhp at the flywheel

Words and photography: Rob Hawkins



Jeep's Wrangler Rubicon has been a worldwide success since the plans to cater for off-road addicts were put in motion back in 1999. Based on the coil sprung Wrangler TJ that was launched in 1997, production of the limited edition Rubicon eventually commenced in 2007. At the time, for an extra \$6000 over the standard Wrangler (about £9000), the Rubicon came with several off-road accessories, including Dana 44 axles with limited slip differentials, selectable lockers, 31 or 32-inch mud terrain tyres, a 4:1 transfer case and a fixed rear output shaft. A few changes to the Rubicon specification have been made over the years, including a shift from air-actuated lockers to electronic in 2007. The Rubicon brand is still available for new Jeeps, including a Wrangler Rubicon Hard Rock with Rock-Trac off-road components, Tru-Loc mechanical lockers, heavy-duty steel bumpers for mounting a winch and heated

front seats. Worldwide sales to date for the Rubicon range total an impressive 220,473.

The 2008 Rubicon seen here had many of the aforementioned off-road accessories already fitted, until its owner, Frenchman Chris Guilloteau, got hold of it. He wanted to venture a little further with performance after having modified a Cherokee KJ and taken first place for the best-equipped Jeep at the 2013 European Jeepers Jamboree in France.

"I stopped using the KJ for off-roading as I wanted something more heavy duty," he explains. "I bought this JK Rubicon from a garage in Southport in October 2013. Nowadays there are so many JKs about that they almost become ordinary, so I wanted to make mine different."

The Rubicon already had a marginal lift in ride height thanks to its standard 32-inch diameter tyres. However, Chris ►

FEATURE VEHICLE

Wrangler Rubicon



has raised it by a further five inches by fitting an even larger set of 37-inch diameter Cooper Discoverer STT tyres, wrapped around 17-inch Dick Cepek DC2 six spoke alloy wheels. Plus, the coil springs are longer to accommodate the extra five inches and are matched with Fox remote reservoir shock absorbers.

Chris has also fitted Bestop High Rock steel bumpers, a spare wheel carrier, a winch at the front, changed the original hardtop for a soft top and

Rubicon had a 3.8-litre V6 petrol engine mated to a four-speed automatic gearbox. With roughly 200bhp at the flywheel, he admits it was okay on the motorway, but definitely lacking in power.

"When my girlfriend and I went to the Chambon sur Jepp in Auvergne in France in April 2014, we saw a JK fitted with the famous V8 Hemi engine and a five speed automatic gearbox," says Chris, "I thought that was the answer to my problem."

"Nowadays there are so many JKs about that they almost become ordinary, so I wanted to make mine different"

fitted an on board air compressor to allow him to adjust the tyre pressures when driving off-road.

The performance upgrades were catered for with one major modification – a different engine. The Wranglers have long been known for having a 4-litre petrol engine, but there's also a 3.6-litre V6 petrol and a 2.8-litre diesel. Chris's

Having not heard of anyone attempting to fit a Hemi V8 into a Rubicon in the UK, Chris realised he could be the first person to do this (it's a popular conversion in the USA and Australia). The Hemi name dates back to 1951 and refers to the shape of the combustion chambers in each cylinder head, which are a half-dome, or



hemisphere. The first Hemi V8s had a single centrally mounted camshaft and two rocker shaft assemblies per head to operate the inlet and exhaust valves that were positioned at opposite sides of the combustion chamber. Production for this design became expensive, so many of the design traits of the Hemi have been dropped, but the name remains along with the single camshaft and the double rocker shafts in each cylinder head.

A popular Hemi engine is the 5.7-litre V8 from the Dodge Ram or Jeep Grand Cherokee. So a second-hand Hemi was



sourced for this project from a breaker's yard, which was believed to have come from a Grand Cherokee. It needed a complete rebuild, which was completed by an engine builder in Kent, before it was transported to Sunderland 4x4 in West Yorkshire where the engine transplant was completed.

Fitting a Hemi V8 into a Wrangler isn't exactly a straight swap. Being RHD in this case, the steering box obstructs components such as the alternator and air conditioning pump, which are positioned in the front lower area of the engine. The same engine found in the Dodge Ram has these ancillaries positioned at the top of the front of the engine, so several engine components were sourced from a Ram to resolve these issues.

Other items that helped with the engine transplant came from the Jeep Speed Shop in California, which sells a conversion kit that includes a new wiring loom, ECU, alloy radiator, hoses, engine mounts and even the exhaust manifolds and stainless steel system. Many of these components along with the Dodge Ram accessories help to increase the power output of the engine, which should produce 345bhp at the flywheel. Thanks to injectors and an induction system from a Dodge

Ram, and the ECU and performance exhaust system from the Jeep Speed Shop, Chris estimates the power output is closer to 360-375bhp.

The engine transplant didn't begin with removing the original 3.8-litre V6 and automatic gearbox. Instead, the bodywork had to be removed. This was lifted off the rolling chassis and took James Sunderland of Sunderland 4x4 six hours, but he admits this was his first attempt, so he's confident he can complete the job in less time in the future.

With a fully exposed rolling chassis, the V6 petrol engine and auto box were removed. The standard engine mounts were cut off the chassis and new ones fitted from the kit supplied by the Jeep Speed Shop.

The Hemi V8 was mated to a five speed automatic gearbox from a Grand Cherokee, then lowered into the chassis without needing to modify the propshafts. The new exhaust manifolds and system were fitted and several other components before the bodywork was refitted in a bid to see how much engine bay space remained. Room was at a premium, but there was just enough to manoeuvre everything into position and even fit a couple of batteries under the bonnet (the second battery powers the front mounted winch). Plus, there

was space to fit the pipework for a Rugged Ridge XHD modular snorkel. This is connected to the main induction system under the bonnet and consists of two combinations.

Top to bottom:

Chris's Wrangler has all you might expect, and then some. Check out the Fox dampers, extra battery power and monster winch. Inside it's relatively standard

"What is great about this snorkel is that if I don't plan to do any off-roading in wet areas, and I mean crossing water deeper than four feet, the little box is safe enough to ensure a dry, clean and cool supply of air to the engine," Chris explains. "If I plan to go into deeper water, I just have to fit the ram high mount, which extends the air intake an

FEATURE VEHICLE

Wrangler Rubicon



additional 21 inches to the top of the windscreen."

The engine transplant took three weeks of long days to complete. The ECU from the Jeep Speed Shop included a useable map, so the Hemi V8 could be fired into life and tested without the need to visit a rolling road or tuning specialist. So, was the engine conversion worth all the time and effort? "It is a big engine and a tight fit in that engine bay, but the noise it makes...." comments James Sunderland. "And it goes like a stabbed rat."

Chris is also impressed, explaining, "Not only has this engine got more power than I was expecting, but it is delivered in a gentle linear manner if you are light on the throttle, but if you stand on the loud pedal, then it's a different story. It can deliver that kind of kick in the butt that you normally feel at the wheel of a sports car, not a 4x4." **4x4**



Top Left: The man himself, Chris Guilloteau, standing proudly with his Wrangler. Chris has taken the Jeep on adventures across both Belgium and France (below)



SPECIFICATION: 2008 Jeep Rubicon Wrangler

Engine:	5.7-litre overhead valve Chrysler Hemi V8 with single camshaft, multi-point sequential fuel injection system, single throttle body, alloy radiator, aftermarket ECU, Rugged Ridge XHD modular snorkel
Gearbox:	Five-speed auto
Differentials:	Live axles with locking diffs and 5.35:1 final drive ratio
Suspension:	Five-inch lift through wheels/tyres and longer coil springs. Fox remote reservoir shock absorbers, Rubicon electronically controlled front anti-roll bar, polyurethane bushed link arms
Steering:	Steering box with Rugged Ridge damper
Brakes:	Servo assisted dual circuit system. Single piston calipers all round with vented front discs and solid rear discs
Wheels/Tyres:	17-inch Dick Cepek DC2 six spoke alloy wheels with 37-inch diameter Cooper Discoverer STT tyres
Interiors:	Full leather seats with standard dashboard and instruments
Exterior:	Standard wheel arches and roll bar. Bestop High Rock bumpers, Warn swing out wheel carrier, nine-inch LED spot lights, polished stainless steel bull-bar, front mounted King One TDS-9.5C winch



USEFUL CONTACTS

Sunderland 4x4: 01422 833373

G-Force 4x4: 01422 885555 / www.gforce4x4.co.uk

Jeep Speed Shop: www.jeepspeedshop.com

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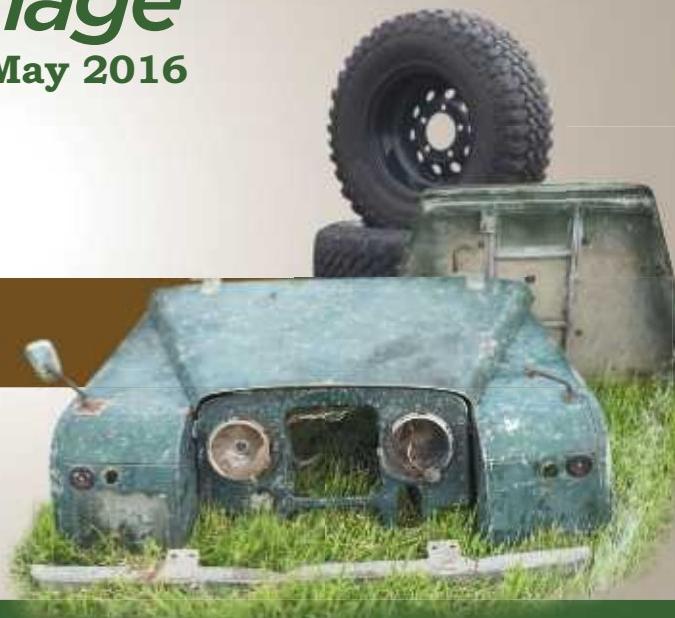
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LEASE -OF- LIFE

As fly-drive holidays go, five African countries in a rented Nissan truck takes some beating – but just how would two 4x4 novices cope with 6500kms of desert, road and bush?

Words and photography: Mike Breslin



There is one journey my wife Jas and I have always wanted to make; London to Cape Town, the classic African driving adventure. It's never quite been feasible, though. Either we've not had enough time, or more often we've not had enough money, or sometimes Africa's just had way too much politics. Either way the stars have never quite aligned when it's come to this trip. But there was another way: compromise.

So, how could we get a good taste of Africa without spending a fortune, taking too much time off work, or getting shot? After much deliberation the route we chose was a 6500km curl that took us from Johannesburg in South Africa, into Namibia, then Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and finally Botswana again, and we had just under four weeks to do it. Our plan was partly dictated by the pick-up and drop-off options with the



The vehicle for this adventure was a Nissan Hardbody hired from Britz, with part time 4x4. This was the result of another limitation that I might have added, actually. My skill set is very

My skill set is very narrow, and does not include mechanical stuff, such as preparing an expedition equipped 4x4, and we certainly couldn't afford to buy one. So hiring was the only way

hired truck, but it also took into account our desire to get a real flavour of this huge continent, encompassing deserts, vast grasslands, mighty rivers and waterfalls, and some of the best game reserves in Africa.

narrow (I make quite good chilli), and does not include mechanical stuff, such as preparing an expedition equipped 4x4, and we certainly couldn't afford to buy one. So hiring was the only way.

Of course, a 4x4 in much of Africa is

a no-brainer, but to be honest I never really gave much thought to all that off-roading stuff, it was the roof tent that was the initial attraction. In fact, I have to admit that although I've driven my fair share of racing cars and sports cars, and even some looney 4x4 Subarus and Mitsubishi Evos, I've never really had much to do with proper 4x4s and I certainly had no experience of off-roading. This became apparent when we were being briefed at the Britz depot in Johannesburg: "Low range; high lift jack; compressor ..." What was this bloke talking about? I decided to figure it all out as I went along, how hard could it be?

Our first taste of the rough stuff was in South Africa's Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, in the Kalahari. On entering we

Above: The locals kept their distance... thankfully

Below: The Nissan pick-up truck proved a comfortable ride and a great 'home' from which to watch the amazing wildlife



ADVENTURE

Self-drive Africa

were advised to set our tyre pressures at 1.6bar (from 2.5bar at the front, 3bar, rear), because of the corrugations. Now I'm still not sure if this was for our comfort, or to help stop the corrugations getting worse, but I do know that in places the ride was akin to driving with 50p-shaped wheels. So, as wonderful as the scenery and wildlife was in Kgalagadi, we were a little relieved to cross the border into Namibia, with its famously good unpaved roads, before we'd lost too many fillings.

Not all of Namibia's roads are unpaved, but many are, and not all of these are smooth, either, yet most are of a standard to make rapid progress possible. But the best thing about driving in Namibia is the space. Crossing the Namib Desert to reach the sea at Walvis Bay we hardly saw another car, and the drive up the Skeleton Coast to Terrace Bay was



Left: Jas preparing dinner one evening in the bush. The Nissan was well equipped and we certainly had enough home comforts to allow for some fine dining

simply unbelievable. Before that we had approached the Skeleton Coast from the desert, where we'd camped, and after one of those blissfully empty drives a dark seam appeared on the distant horizon, growing into a black band between sand and sky as we came closer. At first we thought it was a sandstorm. But soon enough we realised it was fog over the coast. As experiences go driving through a desert in the fog takes some beating ... But bursting out of the fog into the sunlight comes close.

It's not all desert in Namibia, though, and there's a point where the land changes dramatically. North from the Mururani Gate, a gap in the veterinary control fence on the road to Rundu, everything begins to feel more green, more 'African': there are far more trees, the population's much denser, while there's a big increase in the amount of cattle and donkeys on the roadside – and, indeed, on the road. But the thing that really struck me was the amount of villages of little round reed, wood and mud huts. I suppose I'd assumed that the pictures in the guidebooks of these quaint little dwellings were taken at 'tourist villages' and that most of the poorer settlements would be made up of corrugated iron sheds, as they are south of the vet' fence.

There were plenty more of these villages on the long drive down the Caprivi Strip from Rundu before we crossed into Botswana and Chobe National Park, and one of the most memorable night's camping ever: just us, our truck ... and a herd of elephants! Actually, that's not quite true, for we also had a visit from a heavily armed Botswanan Army patrol while I was cooking up a chilli on the one-hob gas stove (they were on anti-poaching



duties, but luckily I wasn't doing eggs), which made me wonder if the danger we faced was not so much from the lions we heard roaring in the night, but more the desperate men who were after the tusks of our near neighbours.

In the middle of that night the elephants came very close, and a little later so did a herd of buffalo, passing us by on either side as if we were a rock in a dark bovine river. Yet despite this sort of distraction it was usually easy enough to sleep in the tent. Britz boasts it supplies the biggest beds available, and the Howling Moon roof tent was an amazing piece of kit and very easy to use – by the end of the trip we could set up camp in close to five minutes.

We also got used to the 4x4 quickly enough. All the deflating and inflating of tyres for sand was a bit of a chore, but on balance better than digging the thing out. Driving on sand was fun, too, as were the steeper rocky slopes we had to negotiate on occasion. I had been advised to keep it in low range, first gear, and let it crawl on idle. It was advice that went against everything I always thought driving was about, but it worked, and it was also a strangely satisfying experience. In fact, the off-road driving proved to be far less stressful than I might have anticipated. The real stress

was reserved for the border crossings, such as entering Zambia.

The only direct way in to Zambia from Botswana is across the Zambezi on the Kazungula Ferry. To get to the ferry you first need to drive past a queue of lorries that stretches for about a mile. I'm glad we had been advised to drive past and not join the line, as I'm sure we'd still be there now if we had. The ferry is just a single pontoon, with room for two trucks and a handful of cars, so no wonder the queue was so long.

Border and customs on the Zambian side might be described as organised chaos, except there was little sign of organisation. We spent quite a few hours there, and left to visit the truly awesome



Left: The Kazungula ferry, crossing the Zambezi River between Botswana and Zambia - one of the more nerve-wracking moments

HARD DRIVE

If you ever feel the need to have an indepth understanding of the life of your average African petrol pump attendant – typically, but not always, late teen lads – then you could do worse than travelling in a truck with a reserve tank fitted. On average our fuel stops took around 10 to 15 minutes, I reckon (something to do with a breather pipe), with the nearly always chatty pump operator squeezing every last drop of diesel into the tank with the care of a whisky connoisseur pouring a measure of 50-year old Dalmore scotch.

That wasn't really a problem of course, we were always glad to know we had plenty of fuel on board, especially in the desert, and filled to the brim the Nissan could hold 140 litres while it could do 100km on 12 litres, which gave us a theoretical range of over 1100km.

We were also glad to know we had a sturdy truck beneath us. The Nissan NP300 Hardbody, which is marketed as a 'tough as nails' one-tonne bakkie (pick-up), comes in both two and four-wheel drive. But why 'Hardbody'? Veralda Schmidt of Nissan South Africa explained: "It's called Hardbody because the steel is a fraction thicker than used in other vehicles." Nissan's Hardbodys are built in Pretoria, and are aimed at the construction, agricultural and industrial markets. Our truck started life as a 2.5 TDI (130bhp, 304Nm) with part time 4x4 and a five-speed 'box. It comes with no luxuries, except for air con, though I guess that in Africa that could be seen as more of a necessity.

Britz (www.britz.com) uses 4x4 specialist Gerbers to modify its Nissans (and other trucks), which adds the aluminium storage canopy with sturdy locks (incidentally, the square insets used to contain jerry cans but Britz says they kept getting stolen; now they make a handy step when it comes to getting on the roof), the extra tank, an Engel fridge, 12v battery, 55 litre water tank, insulated storage lockers, and a sturdy table that slides – in an ergonomically satisfying way – into the underside of the roof.

Gerbers also fits chunky bull bars to the front. But these are certainly not for show, as one of the major hazards when driving in Africa is animals in the road (and drunk drivers; because of both it is good practice never to drive at night). In fact, during our trip we had to brake or swerve to avoid (deep breath now): gemsbok, springbok, kudu, wildebeest, giraffe, ostrich, warthog, donkey, cow, black backed jackal, hyena, elephant (she was a bit angry, so we quickly backed up), and a cheetah.

The truck (Britz has a full range, this was its 'SCE') cost us 685 rand a day, which at the time of writing is very good value indeed, as the rand is not in a happy place. It's so depressed in fact that you can get 19 rand for a pound. Which means all of the above is yours for about £35 a day.

For that you get a truck that feels tough from the start, which inspires confidence even in the 4x4 novice. That said, we spent a lot of time in 2wd, which meant rear-wheel drive, which meant oversteer. After one sideways moment on a mountain pass in Namibia Jas softly reminded me: "It's not that sort of adventure." Quite right, too, but for any sort of adventure I'd gladly choose a Nissan Hardbody again.

ADVENTURE

Self-drive Africa

Victoria Falls with the sound of rubber stamps still thudding in our ears. The next crossing was in to Zimbabwe, and we had been a bit worried about that one, yet while it took a couple of hours, the process was efficient, and the officials were very friendly.

Friendly is actually the adjective that first comes to mind when I think of Zimbabwe. Like much of Africa the place gets a bad press, especially its police force. One high-end British 4x4 operator actually recommends that punters should not go into Zimbabwe without its expert hand-holding, as you need to know how to bribe the cops. That's bilge. Okay, the police are very active, there are roadblocks right the way down the road from Victoria Falls to Bulawayo, and they check everything – warning triangles, reversing lights, import documents,

I asked him: 'Will I have to go to prison?' which he thought was hilarious, for some reason, and after much friendly banter we paid the \$15 fine



finger nails, and so on – but on the 14 occasions we were stopped by the police in Zim' we were never asked for money. Well, there was once ...

But that wasn't at a check point, it was a speed trap. I had been distracted, easy in Africa, and failed to notice the 60km limit. The cop walked into the middle of the road and waved us down. I asked him: "Will I have to go to prison?" which he thought was hilarious, for some reason, and after much friendly banter we paid the \$15 fine (they use US dollars in Zimbabwe) and shook hands. We were even on first name terms, Joseph and I, and it was such a friendly speeding ticket I almost felt I should tip him.

After Zimbabwe – and an unforgettable hike in lion country with an armed ranger for protection – it was back into Botswana, where we had a close encounter with a bunch of hippos while in a dugout canoe – but that's another story. But then that's Africa, one story after another; you can bet your last rand that Jas and I will be going back for a sequel. **4x4**



Top: Roof tent was very comfortable and felt safe and secure

Middle: Typical African village in northern Namibia

Right: Botswanan army anti-poaching patrol in Chobe

Below: Victoria Falls, truly awesome!





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Electricity North West



Mighty Mercedes-Benz
Unimog U500 launched
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POWER PLAY

Mighty 'Mogs and heavy-duty Hiluxes are the trucks of choice to tackle the treacherous and tricky conditions that confront Electricity North West's hardworking engineers and linesmen

Words and photography: Hils Everitt

PROFESSIONAL USER

Electricity North West



We've all experienced power cuts at some time or another and know how frustrating it is. It makes us realise how much we rely on electricity in our everyday life and how we all take it for granted. When the lights go out and the TV shuts down and we worry about what's in the freezer, we have no idea what has induced the power cut. It might be caused by faults on the underground cables, or vandalism, or severe weather: strong winds, for example, can result in damage to overhead power lines due to flying debris or uprooted trees.

We also have no idea what it takes to get our essential power back working again. What we do expect, however, is

that it will come back on as soon as possible. But what most people don't think about is what it takes for that to happen. There are actually hundreds of mostly unseen engineers and linesmen working for the 14 power companies, slogging around the clock to bring back our taken-for-granted mod cons, and in the still sometimes unruly and dangerous aftermath of those very conditions that caused the outage in the first place. And to do that they often have to venture out to the middle of nowhere to carry out the crucial repairs, lugging all sorts of heavy and technical equipment. Of course, that would not be possible without the use of some pretty impressive vehicles.

One of those 14 power companies is Electricity North West. From its HQ near Blackburn it runs a fleet of 600 vehicles, of which 585 are commercial variants. Within that huge fleet of 585 are 22 Mercedes-Benz Unimogs, one of which is a communications unit. The Unimogs are split between the U500 and U5000 models; they carry all sorts of kit and lifting adaptations to get linesmen up to the overhead cables to do their vital repair work and general maintenance. "We couldn't possibly do the job without them," explains Fleet Manager Graham Davies. Neither could Electricity North West do without the one 38-tonne artic truck, 32-tonne 80-metre crane DAF, the eight 18-tonne trucks, 24 six-tonne large vans, six 3.5-tonne flatbed trucks, a plethora of transit

vans, various other models and a stonking 139 Toyota Hiluxes.

The oldest Hilux currently on the fleet is a 2007 model. "We tend to keep them for seven years. Then we assess which of them are in the best condition and they go into the pool for use elsewhere, mainly by engineers. We take out the seats in the new vehicles and put them into the pool vehicles," continues Graham. "The rest are sold on at auction."

Electricity North West's fleet is selected, in the main, by weight requirements. "Gross vehicle weight is an important figure for us and all our vehicles need to be rated to 3.5 tonnes." Payload is also a major factor, considering the amount of kit that needs to be stowed on board. "We've used 4x4 panel vans in the past, but due to ever increasing safety features on the models, payload has been



Top: Monster 7.5 tonnes-rated, 4.8-litre, 597lb ft U5000 assisted by U500 and Polaris Ranger 6x6 ATV in the field

Left: The U5000 is a perfect machine for line maintenance



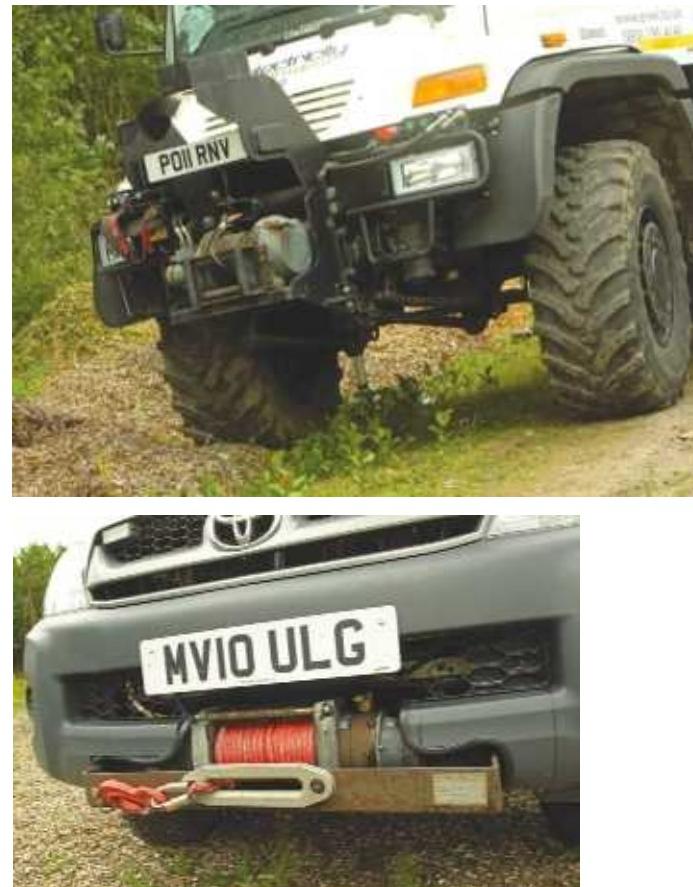
reduced, making the panel vans not fit for purpose. Yes, they may get you across a muddy field, but we can't get anything in them," adds Delivery Manager Phil Lee. Having said that, many linesmen like the panel van purely because they can stand up in it to change and you can't do that in a 'Mog or pick-up truck.

Back in the day, the fleet consisted of 200 Land Rover Defenders. That has now been whittled down to only two that bear 2008 plates and carry the Mobile Elevation Work Platforms. Apart from the initial price of the Defender, its high running costs, plus sporadic mechanical unreliability, the vehicle was also uncomfortable to drive and there was no room for transporting colleagues, nor any drying areas. In all the non-Solihull vehicles today there are specific drying areas, warmed up by night heaters that pipe the warm air to the body – these are essential. Many vehicles also have 'welfare' modifications, which include washing and cooking facilities, as linesmen can be working for very long hours in all

sorts of conditions.

It's not difficult to see why the Toyotas are more appealing and have replaced the Green Oval models. The good news about the Defender, however, is that resale is good: "We got £9000 for a 58-plate 90 so that was very welcome," smiles Graham. Every cloud, as they say. But also knowing the Defender was coming to its demise in its current form has meant that Graham and Phil, like their colleagues in other utility industries, have had to look elsewhere anyway.

Vehicles chosen by Graham are subject to tender. He was very interested in the Isuzu D-Max, but the rival Japanese company didn't submit a bid so Toyota won the contract. Graham also has a deal with Hankook to supply the rubberwear, which on the Linesmen's Hiluxes, is the DynaPro MT 245/76R16. Mud terrains are essential for this application – we even saw a Ford Transit 4x4 shod in a set of these Hankook MTs – now that was a strange sight. "The side luggers on them are excellent," adds Phil. "You get extra bite."



Depending on the application, the trucks are fitted with anything from cherry pickers to merely load bed canopies and integral drawer and storage systems. Some are used as chippers, when linesmen have to fell trees and then need to deal with the debris.

The fleet of Hiluxes is modified by Pickup Systems Ltd (PUSL), near Burnley, which specialises in commercial vehicle conversions. PUSL fits winches, the rear bodies with drawer systems, gullwing truck tops (supplied by WorkStyle), inverters, roof ladder racks and pipe tubes, dry cell dual batteries, the night heaters and piping to the body for the kit-drying area. It also upgrades Gross Vehicle Weight to 3500kg, which includes air suspension. As you can see from the pictures, the storage systems house all manner of tools, equipment and safety gear. Some winch bumpers have been designed by Electricity North West itself and, on inspection, one 3.5-tonne rated Champion model looked very well used and battle-worn on a 10-plate Hilux.

These trucks certainly earn their keep; they operate in all weathers and have to cope with all sorts of conditions from deep mud, the marshland around the West Lancashire area and the difficult ground that can be found up north in Cumbria and the Peak District. All linesmen get training in driving off-road and learn to adapt to the conditions. "We have found the Hilux has performed better than the Defenders in some cases," smiles

Top left: Hiluxes unstoppable on tricky ground, including marshland

Top right: Well-used mega Ramsay winch from Tulsa Oklahoma on U5000

Above: Hilux gets the 3500kg Champion winch

Left: Repairing overhead lines in benign conditions is easy - but not in strong winds



PROFESSIONAL USER

Electricity North West



Graham. "Especially on the marshland," interjects Phil with a nod. "If you got bogged down in the Land Rovers, then that was it, they were very difficult to extract. Not so with the Hilux."

Getting stuck in the Unimogs is just not thinkable. The U5000 is a beast of a machine, which requires special driving skills. It's rated at 7.5 tonnes, is powered by a 4.8-litre turbodiesel with selectable 4WD with eight forward gears, six reverse and 597lb ft of torque. And you can slide the entire driving position from one side to the other – very handy.

Unimogs are, naturally, the *pièce de résistance* of the power vehicle fleet. They feature all sorts of attachments, as well as lifting mechanisms to get the linesmen to the power lines, plus massive winches and PTOs. Tyre choice is quite important for the Mercedes-Benz trucks. "We order new Unimogs with 240kg taken off the rear axle and operate on soft tyres so that they perform better off-road," explains Graham. Michelin XM47 Tractor grips are fitted as tyre sidewalls can flex, reducing ground pressure. They are, however, subject to damage due to the soft wall, but Graham reports only a small percentage of tyres are damaged every year and the tyre budget is already a whopping £12-18,000 a month. 'Mogs



are fitted with massive Ramsey winches from Oklahoma. These Mercedes-Benz trucks are monsters off-road and can get anywhere with no need for underbody protection; and the linesmen really look after them – "it's like having your own vehicle and it's a living space," adds Graham.

That is essential when guys are literally camping out in them for long periods of time. They do this to make sure the good people of the north west get more than 23 terawatt hours of electricity every year (apparently that equates to 2.7 million electric heaters being switched on for 265 days); that 13,000km of overhead lines remain intact and functional and over 44,000km of underground cables, over 34,000 transformers and 86,000 bits of switchgear are all working properly. Those are some stats.

Recent winters have made all that



Top: Defender 90 once ruled - Toyota Hiluxes now

Above: Essential Hilux rubberwear: 16in Hankook DynaPro MTs. 'Mogs shod in soft Michelin XM47

Middle: Hilux WorkStyle canopy specially adapted for parts storage

Left: One of many ESW engineer and linesmen teams - cheers guys!

impressive work a touch tricky and meant the team has been extremely busy. "Here in the west there is nothing to stop the winds," says a resigned Phil. The power companies do get notice of impending storms from the Met Office, so then the standby crew is doubled. Sometimes teams are not sent out during storms as that would be too dangerous. "We had notice of two emergencies last winter. One didn't happen, but you have to be prepared," remarks Graham.

Well, we are very thankful they are; can't imagine what it must be like in all that destruction to have to jump into your 'Mog or Hilux pick-up and drive to the trouble spots and spend long hours in the freezing cold repairing lines after storms or high winds - or even when pesky geese just randomly fly into them and cause disruption on an average day. We're all cosily wrapped up indoors, not even contemplating venturing outside in our 4x4s - power to the linesmen and their magnificent trucks. **4x4**



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TECHNICAL

Nissan Pathfinder



SURVIVAL GUIDE NISSAN PATHFINDER

This big Nissan is a popular family 4x4. Follow our guide to routine inspection and servicing for the third generation of mighty Pathfinder

Words and photography: Rob Hawkins

Nissan's Pathfinder has become a popular, reasonably upmarket 4x4 that's retained good second-hand resale value since it was first introduced in 1985. The model we're concentrating on for this survival guide is the third generation, which started in 2005 and ended in 2012. Underneath the bulky off-road exterior, there's a similar chassis to the Nissan Navara, which is equipped with coil sprung and double wishbone suspension. Maintenance of these components generally requires a routine inspection to make sure bushes haven't worn and coil springs haven't fractured.

The Pathfinder's braking system consists of discs all round. The best

method of maintaining brakes is to regularly strip, inspect and clean them to ensure they remain working to the best of their ability. We've provided a step-by-step guide showing how to do this.

Most Pathfinders are powered by a 2.5-litre diesel engine, although there are some with a 4-litre V6 petrol engine. Checks within the engine bay are relatively straightforward, thanks largely to the amount of space available.

The following pages provide a series of step-by-step guides to help show what's involved in a routine inspection of engine fluids and ancillaries, the brakes, suspension and wheels and tyres. Set aside half a day or longer to run through all of these aspects of the Nissan Pathfinder.

Toolbox

- Battery tester**
- Brake cleaner**
- Coolant tester**
- Copper and multi-purpose grease**
- Pry bar**
- Screwdrivers**
- Spanners/sockets 10-16mm**
- Spray grease**
- Torch**
- Trolley jack and axle stands or two-post ramp**
- Tyre tread depth gauge**
- Water pump pliers**
- Wire brush**

ENGINE BAY CHECKS



The air filter is located in the nearside front of the engine bay, inside a plastic housing. Release the retaining clips, lift the lid, then manoeuvre the air filter out to inspect it. If it's dirty, renew it – a new one costs between £6 and £15



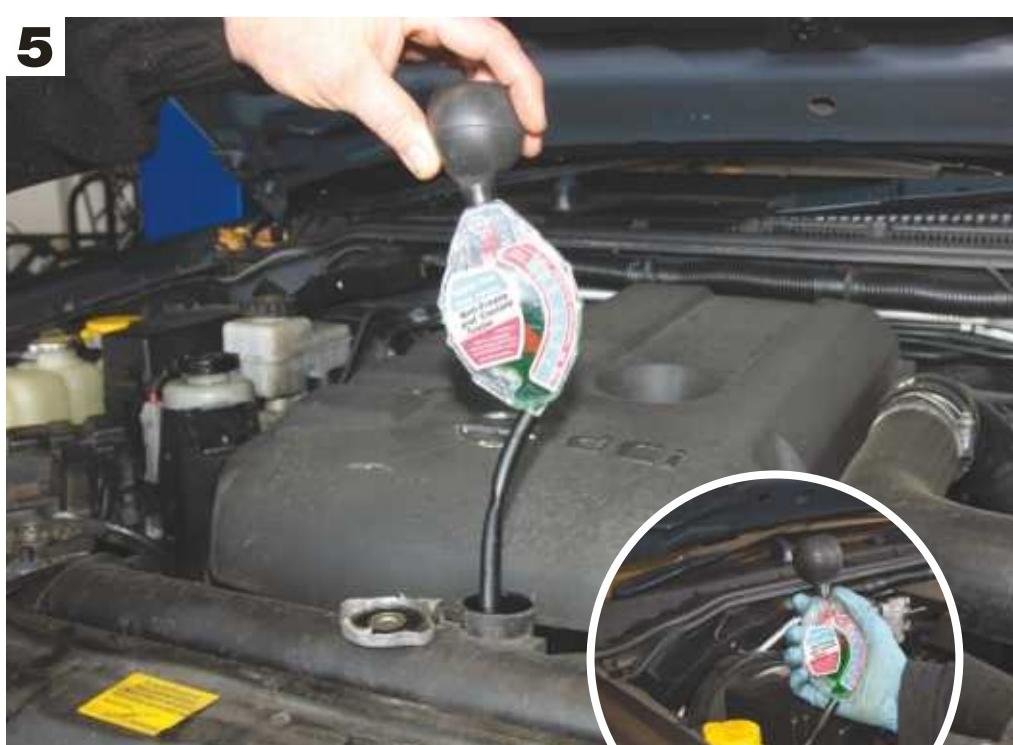
Use a vehicle battery tester (most of them cost less than £10) to check the condition of the battery and also check it after using the headlights or a similar electrical component that uses lots of power. The Pathfinder's battery is located at the offside front of the engine bay



Make sure the connections on the battery terminals are secure and clean, and the battery is also secure. Spray some grease over the terminals to reduce the risk of corrosion and to help keep them clean



Most of the fluid levels can be checked within the offside front of the engine bay, where you'll find the power steering fluid and brake fluid reservoirs, the coolant expansion tank and the windscreen wash bottle



When the engine is cold, check the coolant level in the expansion tank (offside front of the engine bay). If you have an anti-freeze and coolant tester, check the coolant to make sure it can withstand extreme temperatures



Spray some light grease over the bonnet release mechanism at the front of the engine bay, over the latch on the underside of the bonnet and across the hinges at the back. It's also worthwhile spraying grease over the door and tailgate hinges

UNDERSIDE CHECKS



Inspect any rubber boots for the suspension ball joints and track rod ends and the gaiters for the driveshafts. If they are cracked and letting dirt through, they will fail the MOT test. Visually inspect the coil springs for fractures



Inspect the fuel tank strap, making sure it isn't damaged or extensively corroded. The fuel tank is located on the underside of the Pathfinder, near the rear of the vehicle. If you want to preserve the strap, paint some rust protection along it



Make sure the exhaust system is secure and any hangers or mounts are not broken or perished. Run the engine and listen for leaks from the joints. Inspect the condition of the brake and fuel lines, ensuring they are secure and not damaged



You can use a pry bar to check for play in the universal joints for the propshafts. There are joints at the front and rear of the propshaft, which connect the drive from the gearbox to the rear axle

TECHNICAL

Nissan Pathfinder

BRAKE CHECKS



The Pathfinder has disc brakes all round. At the front, there are twin piston calipers with two slider bolts. Spray brake cleaner over the brakes, then undo both slider bolts. If the housing which the slider bolt is threaded into starts to spin, secure it with a spanner



Spray brake cleaner over the caliper carrier, then clean it with a wire brush. There may be some metal clips that the brake pads sit in, so make sure these are clean and still fitted. Clean inside the caliper, but don't damage the rubber boots for the pistons



Apply a smear of copper grease to the top and bottom edges of the brake pads (not the braking material), then fit them back inside the caliper carrier. A little copper grease can also be applied to the backs of the inner brake pads, where the pistons make contact



The rear brakes have single piston calipers, but have the same fittings as the front brakes. So start by spraying over the brakes with brake cleaner, then undo the two slider bolts to be able to prise off the caliper



After removing both slider bolts, carefully prise the caliper off and place it on top of the upper wishbone and brake disc, ensuring the brake flexi-hose isn't over stretched (inspect the flexi-hose at the same time)



Clean all the edges of the brake pads with a wire brush and spray over them with brake cleaner. Run a screwdriver down the gap in the middle of the braking material to clear any dirt out – dirt builds up here, so it should be removed



Check the sliders are free and lubricated. The slider bolts from step 1 are threaded into these. Detach the rubber boots and pull each slider out to inspect it. If necessary, clean and grease it with multi-purpose grease



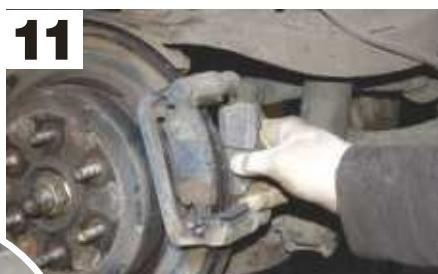
Remove the brake pads. If they are stuck in the carrier, use a screwdriver to carefully prise them out, but avoid damaging them or the brake disc. The top or bottom edges of the pads may have spring clips, so they are usually a tight fit



Use a tyre depth gauge to measure the thickness of each brake pad's braking material. The minimum amount is 1.5mm for the MOT test. If one brake pad is excessively or unevenly worn, all of the brake pads must be renewed



You may need to retract the caliper's pistons to be able to refit the caliper, especially if you have fitted new brake pads. It's worth doing this to check the pistons haven't seized. Use a pair of water pump pliers and a piece of flat steel to spread the load



The brake pads can be gently levered out of the caliper carrier, then cleaned, inspected and refitted with a smear of copper grease along the top and bottom edges. Clean inside the caliper carrier and the caliper before refitting the brake pads



You should check the condition of all the brake flexi-hoses and the pipework that they are attached to. Look carefully for any signs of corrosion, perishing and bulging. If you are at all unsure about a flexi-hose, the answer is always to renew it. Don't leave a hose that you feel unsure about

SUSPENSION CHECKS

**1**

Inspect any rubber boots for the suspension ball joints and track rod ends and the gaiters for the driveshafts. If they are cracked and letting dirt through, they will fail the MOT test. Visually inspect the coil springs for fractures

**3**

The Pathfinder uses double lower wishbones at the front, and the inner mount bushes can be checked with a pry bar to see if they are worn. The upper wishbone can also be tested, but space is a little tighter

**2**

Anti-roll bars are fitted at the front and rear of the Pathfinder. Use a pry bar to check for play in the rubber D-bushes for the mounts. Try wagging the ends of the anti-roll bars to check the drop links (the drop links are short, so it's difficult to detect wear)

**4**

At the rear of the vehicle, there's room to test the upper wishbone's inner bushes using a pry bar, plus the upper mounting bush for the shock absorber. This is easier to do with the rear wheel removed

**5**

The rear lower wishbone bushes can be tested from underneath the vehicle. There's also room to visually inspect the condition of the spring pan, which supports the coil spring (don't touch the coil spring in case you trap your fingers)

**6**

Check for play in the wheel bearings, steering and suspension by raising the vehicle (or one corner at a time), then waggle the road wheel at the top and bottom and from side to side. If play is found, ask someone to help locate the cause

TYRE CHECKS

Inspection of the wheels and tyres should be as routine as filling up the fuel tank. Remove debris stuck in the tread, particularly sharp objects that could cause a puncture. Use a tyre tread depth gauge to check the tyre is road legal. Some tyres have tread wear indicators between the treads to help determine whether the tyre has worn to the legal limit. In the UK, the minimum depth is 1.6mm, but this is greater in several European countries. When checking the tyres, also inspect the wheels, looking for damage, especially around the inside rim.



Many thanks to:

Fengate MOT (Peterborough)
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Paul Walton, Editor of *Jaguar World* magazine and owner of this Pathfinder - regularly reported on in Our 4x4 pages

NOSTALGIA

Porsche 4x4 history

THE UGLY TRUTH



As we report on this year's Dakar Rally, we take a nostalgic look back at former winner Porsche's 4x4 history; a heritage where Dakar success has helped to confirm that the Cayenne is more than just a 'distinctive' looking SUV

Words: Nigel Fryatt

When Porsche unveiled its Cayenne SUV back in 2002, there were two very distinct reactions. Firstly, that it was without doubt a pug ugly vehicle, and secondly, that it was somewhat absurd that a highly successful sports car manufacturer, regular Le Mans winner, and image conscious purveyor of flash motors would know anything about 4x4 vehicles. That the company made such an effort to make the Cayenne's nose design look so much like an inflated version of the 911's front end, only further endorsed that opinion.

Fast-forward 14 years and the Cayenne is now the most successful, and probably the most profitable, Porsche in the company's history. Even the Marmite looks have been smoothed and tweaked, which has helped its impressive sales success.

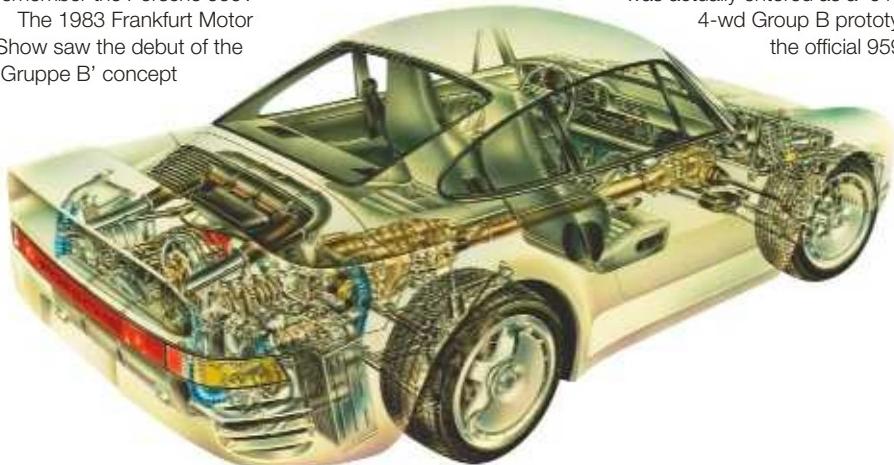
Of course, you could just dismiss the Cayenne as a marketing exercise, that it was merely a re-badged Volkswagen Touareg with a higher list price. Indeed, even this magazine was less than impressed at its launch, as Bob Cooke explained last month in our Cayenne Buying Guide: "Our lack of awe was hardly budged by the realisation that

the Porsche crossover would be based on a Volkswagen and assembled in Bratislava. That is of course before we drove one."

And there's the rub. Porsche had actually been involved in producing a serious off-road vehicle nearly two decades before the Cayenne, when the company decided that after all the sports car racing success, and some surprising European and world rallying victories, it was time for it to win what was then the toughest and most prestigious off-road event of them all, the Paris-Dakar Rally Raid. Now, do you remember the Porsche 959?

The 1983 Frankfurt Motor Show saw the debut of the 'Gruppe B' concept

Porsche sports car. This would become the 959, a ridiculously expensive production supercar and, against the opinions of many 'experts' at the show, it would also – a mere four months later – become the winner of the 1984 Paris-Dakar Rally Raid. René Metge, who had previously won the event in a Range Rover, completed the 6820 mile 1984 event, beating Mitsubishi Pajeros, Mercedes-Benz G-Wagons, Range Rovers, 4x4 Renaults and even Lada Nivas. It was a dominant performance, the Porsche having limited technical problems, running fast and faultless. It was actually entered as a '911 SC 4-wd Group B prototype', the official 959





version not making it into production until the following year. Porsche then returned to the Dakar in 1986 with the proper Group B 959 version, and won again. Both these victories were financed by the Rothmans cigarette company, which in itself 'dates' the success, as this was a time where the 'fag fight' between tobacco giants in international motorsport was nearly as dramatic as the racing itself. Rothmans was a major Porsche supporter in the 1980s, having dominated sports car racing and had just taken a one-two-three victory at the 1982 Le Mans 24-hours race with its 956 Group C race cars. Incidentally, confirming the somewhat stereotypical belief in German 'efficiency' not only did the three Rothmans Porsche sports cars come home in the first three places, they also crossed the line in chassis number order – and I can confirm that, as I was there.

But four-wheel drive off-road competition was new to Porsche and so in many ways, two Dakar triumphs were a surprise and due, to a large extent, to the very clever and at the time, very advanced, 4x4 system used. The PSK (Porsche-Steuer Kupplung) system developed for the 959 was different in that the torque split was able to change during normal running. The default setting was a split of 40:60, but sensors measuring throttle positions,



Top Left: Power for the 959 was a twin turbo, 2.85-litre thumping out 450bhp

Top Right: Talented off-road racer René Metge achieved two Dakar Rally victories for Porsche, in 1984 and 1986

Below: The road-going 959 was a true supercar, shown here in the hands of driving genius Walter Röhrl

steering angles, G-forces and engine turbo boost altered this automatically, at a time when many other 4WD systems merely responded to wheels slipping. Full throttle situations, therefore, would direct 80 per cent of drive to the rear, while on a very slippery surface a 50:50 torque split would occur, offering the vehicle near-perfect traction at any situation. Remember this in the 1980s, today 4WD systems are super sophisticated, even if you are driving a Skoda Yeti, but that was not the case when Porsche took on the Dakar. It could also take a lot of power, since the 959 had a 2.85-litre, twin turbo engine, producing a claimed 450bhp.

But did this have any importance to road cars? To be able to compete in the

highly prestigious Group B class, Porsche had to homologate 200 production road-going models. For motorsport enthusiasts of a certain age, Group B was a glorious time when manufacturers produced all kinds of manically barry high performance race cars, and then scrabbled to prove they had built 200 road-going versions, honest. This era bought us the Audi Quattro, which in itself cleaned up in rallying and influenced many a generation of more prosaic road cars to come. There was, however, nothing prosaic about the Porsche 959. Amazingly, there was also no shortage of people who wanted to buy one of the 200. Indeed the full production run was immediately 'sold', with 200 deposits of Dm50,000 collected long before the finished production vehicle was built. Neither the deposit, nor the full 1985 price of Dm420,000 seemed to be a problem for potential buyers. (With a little help from Google, currency conversion tables and numerous historical references, I would estimate that 1985 price would probably be the equivalent of a \$2million sports car today).

When it arrived, the 959 was indeed a sensational sports car, but it has become something of an 'oddball' 4x4. If it was that great, why didn't Porsche continue to produce beyond the initial 200? At the time, the company was looking to produce 'world cars'; models – like the Cayenne – that it would be



NOSTALGIA

Porsche 4x4 history

able to sell across the globe. The 959 never went to America, because the ridiculous safety regulations at the time would have meant significant changes to the body design, and a hike in the already high list price. (Remember the massive, ugly black bumpers that were nailed on some sports cars at the time? That couldn't happen to the curvaceous 959's body). It was also the time of the catalytic convertor and emission regulations... And we all know about German companies American models and emissions, don't we?

Also, the world motorsport authority, FISA, then announced that Group B cars would be banned, following a number of accidents that involved spectators and the untimely death in Corsica of the immensely talented driver, Henri Toivonen. A racing development of the 959 was produced, called the 961, but that found itself alone in its class at races like Le Mans that meant it couldn't compete with the lighter Group C racers and go for outright wins. If you are a major motor manufacturer, you need outright wins to market your road cars, 'class wins' mean little to most people. True there were a number of customer race cars built for well off gentleman racers, but that's not the same as saying you had just won Le Mans or the Paris-Dakar.

Top: A second-hand Porsche 959 road car these days will cost you in excess of £500,000

Below: Porsche turned the 959 into the 961 circuit racer, but with little success shown here with 2wd Formula 2 Porsche 718 single-seater

Bottom: The Cayenne has never really been tested in international rallying. Here Richard Tuthill is driving one on the 2008 Transsyberia event



Porsche's first serious off-road racing attempt was undoubtedly a great success; two comprehensive wins on the original Paris-Dakar Rally Raids confirm this. It also produced an iconic 1980s supercar. Remember also those 200 deposits that Porsche had in the bank for a number of years, and the fact that the production run sold out, all at 'full list price', and you might think it was a sales success as well. Last year a 959 was auctioned, ironically in America, for \$1.6 million. If you want one today, sales of second-hand versions in Europe are likely to top £500,000; 'good condition, never raced or rallied'. However, as Porsche expert and respected author Michael Cotton explains in his book, *Porsche Progress*: "The gross revenue of DM84 million does not, by any means, cover the cost of the 959's development and a far greater sum has been assigned to the Porsche development ledger." So it was expensive to develop, and didn't make a profit when it arrived. As Cotton concludes: "A technical tour de force is not always a salesman's dream."

Much harder to quantify, of course, is whether any of the 959's development research knowledge was at all useful when the company decided it needed to build a family

SUV. That the Cayenne's been a financial success is not in question, since the model is up there with the Boxster as the most successful Porsche ever built. What is also not in doubt is the fact that the original 959 was technically ahead of its time when it came to computer-controlled four-wheel drive systems, and that similar systems are today commonplace in many vehicles, and not just in expensive supercars.

The Porsche Cayenne may well still be seen by some as an ugly, ostentatious and bloated SUV, what is perhaps less recognised is that it has a 4x4 heritage that dates to success in what was then the world's toughest off-road event. Whether that makes you look at a Cayenne in a different light we don't know, but it certainly has a 4x4 motorsport heritage in its soul, thanks in part to the technology of the 959, the driving talent of René Metge and finances from the era of serious cigarette sponsorship. **4x4**

We have a full report on this year's Dakar event on page 70 of this issue. Plus we follow this Nostalgia story by looking at a privately designed and built Porsche off-road racer, built as homage to the 959.



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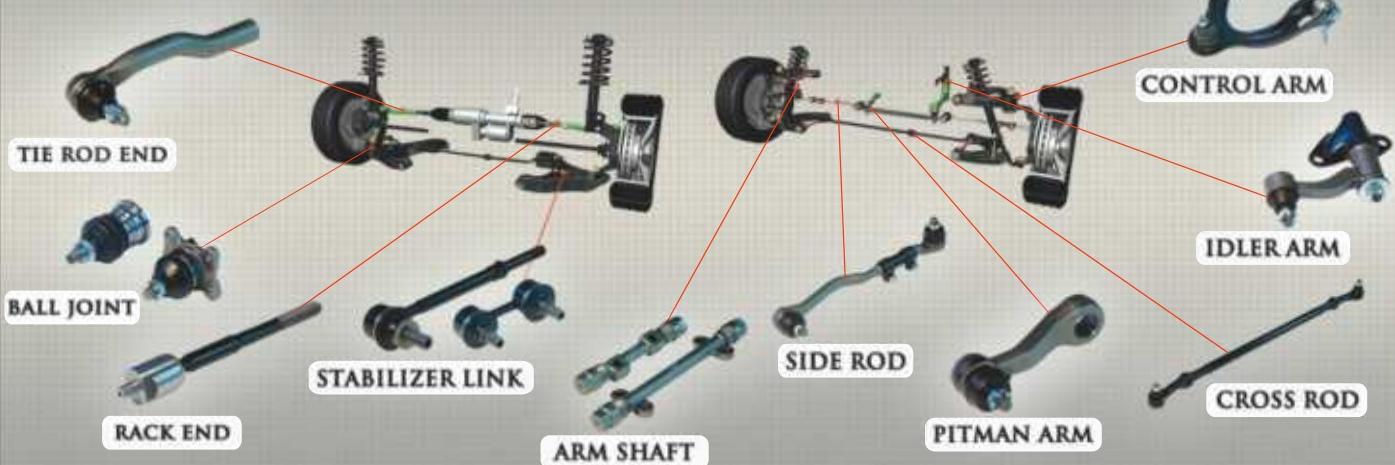


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STEERING AND SUSPENSION PARTS

DESERT STORMER

The 959 lives! Memories of the legendary works Porsche 959 rally champion lead to an amazing transformation and they live on in this superb 964 desert racer. Robb Pritchard talks with owner, builder, and driver Agostino Rizzardi



At first glance you might be mistaken for thinking that this is just some normal desert buggy with Porsche-shaped panels draped over it, but no, this is actually a seriously well-developed 964 version of the ubiquitous Porsche 911 sports car, that has more in common with the iconic Dakar winning 959 than any buggy, and owner Agostino Rizzardi has put a serious amount of work into it.

The story starts 20 years ago when

Agostino bought a Mazda 323 to compete in Italian hill-climbing events with. It was an experience, which infected him with the incurable virus of motorsport speed. After a few years break for college and then to start up his winemaking business, in 2008 he again had time to restart his latent motorsport passion,

"I didn't have enough money for a Ferrari but in Italy you can be forgiven for driving a Porsche. Although it's

German with its shape and style it definitely has the Italian spirit and so I bought a beautiful 993 Supercup race car. It had been well used before me, but was a very reliable car and I did a couple of hillclimb championships in it, with some pretty good results... But it was always rallying that I wanted to do, so I looked for another car, and ended up buying an ex-Jimmy McRae Porsche 964 4x4. It was an amazing machine, 1100kg, six-speed, four-wheel drive, 380bhp, and nobody else had a car like it so it always stood out, which was something else I loved about it."



TECHNICAL

Desert Racer

“But in 2011, I had a new desire. Short little gravel rallies, as fun as they were, weren’t quite the ultimate challenge I was looking for so I started thinking about the big marathon African rallies. And whenever I watched videos on YouTube I kept seeing the amazing works Porsche 959 with the Rothmans livery winning in 1986. At first I thought about pulling the McRae car apart and making some desert-racer prototype out of it, but when I went back to the garage to think about what I could do I realised that the car is really a piece of art so instead of cannibalising it, I decided to start a new project from the ground up.

“So the third car I brought into the garage was a 1989 Porsche 911 964 model road car. When Porsche used to race in the desert they used it as a big test for their parts, and so basically the 959 was the test bed for the engine and transmission of the 964, so I knew that the drivetrain from the Carrera 4 was going to be reliable for what I wanted.

“The first job, obviously, was stripping it down to the shell. We put a cage in and took out the interior to make it a rally car, which even though was still basically a road car, we decided to race in Tunisia. All that was modified was the reinforced shock and spring mounts. It was a six-day event and we were competing with people who were practising for the Dakar and they were laughing at us every day because the suspension only had 10cm of travel... so the fact that we got fourth overall, not just in class, was pretty amazing. But as good as the car was, it was

absolutely destroyed. The body had pretty much come apart, as well as all the suspension parts. But with the result it was clear what we could do with a proper car, so I looked around for someone who would be interested in doing such an unusual project, and found Loris Calubini of Jolly Car. He won the Breslau 10 years ago so was really experienced with hard off-roading and has done a lot of races in Africa too. He looked at my plans, smiled and said that we could make something really interesting. And that’s how the year of building began.

“So, the first thing I did was Google lots of diagrams of Dakar cars like the MINI and the Mitsubishi MP13, cars with the twin shock wheel set up, and took measurements. I wanted 25 to 30cm of suspension travel so we needed the A-arms to be as big as possible. But no one had done anything like that with a Porsche before so we had to design everything ourselves.

“Once the first design was done we took the car down to Tunisia to test it... and it lasted about 200 miles because it was all wrong. We learned some good lessons there though!

“The engine is a 3.8 RarioRam system. It is the last of the air-cooled engines made by Porsche. I chose this because it has lots of torque and you need that much more power to get you out of the sand. The only thing we changed was the camshafts and added a Microtec ECU. The ECU is a great improvement because it only has three wires and is a lot less complicated than the original, something else that makes the car easier to service.

“With the 80cm tall tyres we needed a completely new gearbox though, with much, much shorter ratios and the 964 has a very complicated gearbox. A company in Australia called Albins Gear was the only one I found that had a catalogue for things like this as they make off-road gear to fit anything in off-road racing. It was a very big job but I am very happy with it because after 25,000km it’s still as good as new.

“The body panels are all carbon-Kevlar and I love the way the flares look. From certain angles I can see



something of the 959 in it, which I really like. Of course the car is a lot, a lot wider than the original, 40cm wider in fact so it stands two metres wide from the road going 1.6, so we had to make our own suspension system, driveshafts and joints and this is basically what makes the car so special. It took a long time to get right because it’s an original design of ours that needs to work in quite an extreme way. The earlier designs were fabricated from tubes but now the A-frames are CNC, laser cut box sections and the joints are buggy style, designed for a lot of movement.

“And all this makes it a wonderful car

The Porsche has been built to conquer a variety of off-road terrain conditions, from sand, rock and high speed gravel... and to be quick enough to overtake more traditional off-roaders (below)





to drive. If we are on a dry lake bed we can get up to 190kph and in the desert sand it handles like a little boat on the river. Amazing. Jumping as well. When a front-engined car lands, all the weight bangs down on the front axle and the rear can kick up. In the Porsche it is the opposite. It lands on the lightest end first so in the rough terrain it's very quick. It's also very comfortable because the seats are angled at 110deg not 90 so that I can fit and not bang my helmet on the roof! It's quite tiny inside but I am always driving it with a smile and for me that's actually the most important thing. If you get out after a 500km long stage where you've drunk six litres of water because it's so hot and you are still smiling... that's what I want in a car.

"Once we decided that the design of the car was how we wanted it we decided to work on tuning it and taking out all the weakness so we entered the Touareg Rally. Actually competing is always a much better situation than to just test. On every stage we were out leading but everyday we didn't finish

Top: Quality and width - this is no super-slim 911 sports car!

Above: Fully adjustable diffs tune the transmission

Below: The extensive work that had to go into this build is obvious from these photographs

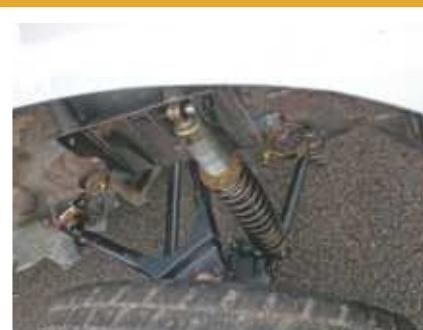


isn't really one that goes fast, it's the one that doesn't break.

"After the testing we've done in the smaller rallies, I think we're ready for the ultimate challenge, which for this car is the Africa Eco Race. It's a 6000km event over nearly two weeks on the old African route from France down to Senegal through Morocco and Mauritania. It's a totally different event to anything anyone of us in the team has done before, because it's just so long and tough. But with all the destruction testing we did in the other rallies we know now which parts we need to change and when, which is probably the most important thing for a serious team on a marathon rally. For example

we know that a clutch will last 4000km, the shocks will last 3000km, the A-frame joints 3000km... so we can have scheduled services through the rally and have two mechanics working on it for 10 hours through the night to check everything, even when there is nothing wrong with it. The biggest issue right now though is finding a good sponsor because getting the parts, the team and service trucks together is a very big project."

Fingers crossed that while the motorsport world is focused elsewhere, there will be a Porsche 4x4 battling for top honours in the wild wastes of western Africa... for the first time in some 30 years! **4x4**



COMPETITION
Dakar Rally 2016

DOUBLE SIX!



Aerial view of
Peterhansel



After six wins on a motorcycle, Stéphane Peterhansel has now achieved six wins on four wheels. This astonishing achievement was not without its challenges, especially this year from the hard charging pick-ups behind him...

Words: Neil Perkins

Stéphane Peterhansel's record on the Dakar Rally may never be beaten. Not content with winning the race six times on a Yamaha motorcycle in the 1990s, the Frenchman clinched a sixth victory in a car at the finish of the 2016 event in Rosario.

After winning the world's most famous off-road rally three times with Mitsubishi in 2004, 2005 and 2007, he sealed two triumphs with the X-raid Mini team in 2012 and 2013. But this dominant victory with Team Peugeot Total was, perhaps, the most surprising and one of the most satisfying.

The results do, however, remain provisional as this is being written. Peterhansel was reported to have refuelled in a restricted zone earlier in the race and the X-raid team protested. Race officials threw out the protest and the Mini team has now taken an appeal to the FIA. This will be heard in due course, but it would be a sad end to an awesome race if the winner was settled in the law courts.

Peugeot had dominated the Dakar with the 205 and 405 T16s between 1987 and 1990, before the PSA Group's Citroën brand took over in the early 1990s. Finn Ari Vatanen claimed three wins in four years and Juha Kankkunen won the other African Dakar for the French manufacturer. But, after being so far off the pace 12

months ago and struggling even to get a car to the finish, it was a remarkable achievement by Bruno Famin's team to transform the DKR 2008 into the potent force it has become.

"It is extraordinary," said a delighted Peterhansel. "The pressure was very high, but we came through. Crossing the finish line was a release from the stressful last few days. It is also a new page in the history of Peugeot, because the guys in the team have been working their socks off for two years. Some of my wins count more than others, but this one is definitely in the top three. Getting the same number of victories on a bike and in a car was the last big goal in my career. I don't think there are many things left to motivate me."

The X-raid team was totally caught out. There has been little ongoing development with the diesel-powered Mini All4 Racing and few improvements to the car that had dominated the Dakar since the withdrawal of Volkswagen Motorsport.

Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah followed up last year's win with second place, but the Mini was no match for the Peugeots on faster, WRC-style stages and the Qatari only regained time in the dunes and soft sand and won two timed tests.

"Two men had me worried before the start and they were

Stéphane and Giniel de Villiers. In the end, it's the three of us on the podium. Stéphane is very smart and Giniel is constant. I'm happy to finish second. I expected to be on the podium when the race started, but I wasn't sure on which step."

Giniel de Villiers has been the model of consistency since he won the Dakar with Volkswagen in 2009. A fifth podium in 13 Dakars fell the way of the South African and his Toyota Hilux, although Mini debutant Mikko Hirvonen pushed him hard near the end and snatched fourth.

Toyota was also rewarded with a career-best fifth place for Leeroy Poulter, while two-time winner Joan Roma fought back from massive delays early in the race to claim sixth. Cyril Despres brought the second Peugeot home in seventh, Vladimir Vasilyev was eighth in an Overdrive Toyota Hilux and early leader Sébastien Loeb (Peugeot) and Britain's Harry Hunt (Mini) rounded off the top 10.

AS IT HAPPENED BUENOS AIRES – SALTA

Dutchman Ten Brinke was the surprise winner of the 11km Prologue stage, north of Buenos Aires, which was reintroduced to the Dakar timetable for the first time since 2005 to determine start orders for the opening special stage.

COMPETITION

Dakar Rally 2016



► A capacity 111 cars tackled the timed test, with double former FIA World Rally Champion Carlos Sainz snatching second position and former rally star Xavier Pons pedalling his Ford Ranger into third.

The rally proper should have begun with a 258km special stage between Rosario and Villa Carlos Paz, after a long liaison across Argentina and into the Province of Córdoba. The stage was set to take place over narrow mountainous tracks often used in the Rally of Argentina, but incessant rainfall and thunderstorms forced the ASO to cancel the entire day's schedule and cars reached Villa Carlos Paz on the route laid out for assistance vehicles.

Rain continued into the third day as well and race officials decided to stop the 510km special stage to Termas de Rio Hondo at the fourth passage control after 387km.

Loeb made a superb start to his Dakar career and the fastest time on the special was the reward, the Frenchman beating veteran Peterhansel by 2min 23sec. Team member Carlos Sainz dropped six minutes early on with mechanical issues and Pons, Roma, Terranova and Al-Attiyah all lost time stuck in thick mud, a puncture not helping the Qatari's cause either.

Top Left: Bernhard Ten Brinke in the fully independent suspension Toyota Hilux - a sign of things to come?

Above: Stéphane Peterhansel at speed

Right: The end of the road for Carlos Sainz

Toyota made a good start with the new Hilux, fitted with all-round independent suspension for the first time. De Villiers came home third, Poulter was fifth and Vasilyev was sixth of the eight Toyota Gazoo and Overdrive cars entered in the rally. Several drivers also incurred one-minute penalties for speeding violations. The next stage to San Salvador De Jujuy was shortened from 314km to just under 200km because of rainfall and thunderstorms.

Only Al-Attiyah and Sainz could stay

with the nine-time WRC champion, who beat De Villiers by 2min 02sec to extend his advantage over the South African to 5min 03sec. Sainz completed the stage in second to give Peugeot another 1-2 finish, although he was 1min 23sec behind Loeb.

Next on the cards was a 429km loop around the San Salvador de Jujuy bivouac, held over a mixture of rocky and sandy terrain at an average altitude of 3500 metres, northwest of Jujuy, in the Andes foothills.

Peugeot emphasised the progress it has made with the 2008 DKR and Loeb, Peterhansel and Sainz became embroiled in a fight with Al-Attiyah for the stage win. Peterhansel managed to fend off his team-mates to earn the French manufacturer a third successive stage success, while Loeb continued to lead the rally by 4min 48sec from Peterhansel, as Peugeot claimed a stage 1-2-3 finish.

The most successful individual in Dakar history led the way for the cars into Bolivia and into a stage that started at the town of Villazón and climbed to





over 4550 metres above sea level. It was business as usual for Team Peugeot Total; Loeb and Sainz led from Al-Attiyah and Peterhansel through the early kilometres, as the V8 Toyotas struggled with a lack of power at altitude.

Loeb beat Sainz by 22 seconds to earn his third stage win and extended his outright lead over Peterhansel to 7min 48sec. Steering issues cost Ford's Xavier Pons over an hour, Peugeot's Cyril Despres lost time with electrical maladies and Portugal's Carlos Sousa tumbled down the rankings after getting his Mitsubishi stuck in a hole.

Sainz and Al-Attiyah held a distant third and fourth, but Peugeot had the top three places after five days. "It's unbelievable," admitted Al-Attiyah. "For two days I have never pushed so hard in my life. We drove at more than 100 per cent, but we have no chance to catch the Peugeots."

Ninety-nine cars were permitted to start the longest stage of the entire event – a 542km tour around the Bolivian uplands. It was business as usual at the front of the field and the leading three Peugeots continued to edge away from Al-Attiyah, Roma and a group of Toyota Hiluxes.

Peterhansel claimed his second stage win and Peugeot's fifth successive victory. But Loeb lost time near the stage end and dropped 8min 15sec to the Dakar veteran, meaning 'Peter' snatched the outright lead and took an advantage of just 27 seconds into the seventh special between Uyuni and a return to Argentina and the city of Salta.

The seventh stage included a 230km section in Bolivia, a neutralisation route across the frontier into Argentina and a further 106km en route to the rest day in Salta. Loeb was 3min 27sec quicker

than Peterhansel on the opening section and had gained a virtual rally lead of three minutes. The second half was cancelled because of inclement weather conditions and times for the Bolivian part around the mining town of Potosi were recorded. It meant Sainz claimed his first stage win of the campaign and Loeb reached the rest day with a lead of 2min 22sec over Peterhansel.

SALTA – ROSARIO

The first dune crossings and more difficult navigation was on the agenda at the start of the second half of the event and the eighth 393km stage between Salta and Belén. Al-Attiyah headed the trio of Peugeots through the easier first half of the stage, but Loeb got stuck in some soft sand shortly after the second section had begun and lost several minutes of his hard-earned lead.

The Qatari held on from a hard-charging Sainz to claim his first stage win of the race for X-raid, but Sainz was only 12 seconds behind at the finish and moved up to second overall behind new leader Peterhansel. The multiple Dakar champion now had an outright lead of 2min 09sec after Loeb crashed heavily into a hole 10km from the stage

finish and lost his chance of winning the Dakar at his first attempt after an hour went by and he slipped to eighth.

There was no respite either: the ninth loop stage around Belén was only 285km in length, but took place entirely off road in high temperatures and featured many kilometres of vegetation-scattered dunes, camel grass and tricky river crossings to the east of Fiambalá.

Peterhansel struggled from the outset and the Minis came into their own on the special, which was shortened to finish at PC2 on safety grounds after several of the front-running motorcyclists experienced difficulties in the searing heat. Peterhansel's mood was not improved either by the news that the Mini X-raid team had put in an official complaint to race officials about the Frenchman refuelling in an unauthorised zone (180km from the end of the previous stage). Team boss Bruno Famin expressed surprise about the complaint and Peterhansel faced a six-hour penalty or even disqualification if it was deemed to be valid.

Sainz claimed another quickest time and managed to beat Al-Attiyah by 2min 04sec to preserve a 14min 38sec cushion between himself and the

Middle: Ford put up a fight with a number of Rangers. This is Xavier Pons

Above: Chile's Daniel Mas Valdes tackles a classic Dakar Rally stage through Argentina in his Ford Ranger

Below: Martin Prokop in his Toyota Hilux



COMPETITION

Dakar Rally 2016



Qatari, while also gaining a 7min 03sec advantage over Peterhansel. "The stage was really difficult," said Sainz. "It was very soft as well and a lot of vegetation. We stopped two times in the sand and we had a slow puncture, but didn't stop to change it."

The next special between Belén and La Rioja featured another crossing of the formidable soft dunes that have caused so much carnage since the Dakar first visited South America in 2009. Only 81 cars were permitted to start and race officials elected to start the top 10 cars with the leading 10 motorcycles and five top trucks. News also filtered through that race officials had rejected X-raid's complaint about Peterhansel's alleged on-stage refuelling. The German team was not satisfied, however, and has lodged an appeal with the FIA.

Overnight thunderstorms prevented the special from starting on time, but when it did there was drama at the top of the leader board. Sainz lost his way for a time and was passed by De Villiers and then the Spaniard had to stop and change a punctured tyre.

This should have played into Al-Attiyah's hands, but the Qatari barrel-rolled his Mini just over 5km into the special and was able to continue with the loss of around 28 minutes. Van Loon also rolled close to the start, Hirvonen lost his way and so did Peterhansel.

The stage was split into two sections and Sainz lost further time at the start of section two before race officials decided to stop the action at PC5, after 244.7km, because of a dangerous river crossing after heavy rain.

It had been Peterhansel's day and the Frenchman smashed the opposition. Over eight minutes in front of Despres and 20 ahead of Sainz after 174km, 'Peter' now had a clear virtual Dakar lead and held on to claim a third stage win. Al-Attiyah stopped again after 180km to cap a miserable day and Sainz ground to a halt after 213km.

"We had a terrible start and got lost after 32km and wandered around for at least 15 minutes," admitted Peterhansel. "I blew a fuse because I

thought we had lost everything. We took risks and pushed hard on a stage with tricky navigation, off-track sections, drainage channels. I had a flat tyre and started screaming my head off. I was a bit out of my mind but it turned out to be a good day. It's also good to have Cyril (Despres) right behind us."

It was certainly the day of reckoning, although Al-Attiyah managed to get going again and reached the end of the stage one hour behind Peterhansel in the overall standings. De Villiers was the main beneficiary and moved up to third overall.

Overnight, Team Peugeot Total was given no alternative but to withdraw Sainz from the race. His 2008 DKR had suffered a breakage of the adaptor plate linking the gearbox to the engine and mechanics noticed significant internal damage at San Juan. It meant that Peterhansel led the surviving 80 cars into the varied 431km stage between La Rioja and San Juan with an outright rally lead of exactly one hour.

Only 69 cars actually left on allotted times and Al-Attiyah was the pacesetter. But was it too little too late for the Qatari, who went on to claim a second stage win and trim Peterhansel's overall lead from an hour to 51min 55sec.

A resurgent Loeb crossed the finish line in second place and Hirvonen was third. But Peterhansel was one step closer to an unprecedented 12th Dakar triumph.

Just 69 cars started the penultimate 481km special between San Juan and Villa Carlos Paz on the longest day of the Dakar in terms of kilometres – 931km. Hirvonen claimed a first stage win on his Dakar debut in a Mini and closed to within 4min 26sec of De Villiers in third place.

Only 68 cars made the nervy final journey towards Rosario and tackled the short special of 180km. It was a perfect special for Loeb to show what he had produced during the first week and the Frenchman delivered a fourth fastest time of the rally to confirm ninth overall.

There were no dramas for any of the leading group, however, and Peterhansel stayed clear of trouble to finish 7min 37sec behind his team-mate



2016 DAKAR RALLY FINAL POSITIONS (provisional)

1. Stéphane Peterhansel (FRA)/Jean-Paul Cottret (FRA)	Peugeot DKR 2008	45hr 22min 10sec
2. Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah (QAT)/Matthieu Baumel (FRA)	Mini All4 Racing	45hr 57min 08sec
3. Giniel de Villiers (ZAF)/Dirk von Zitzewitz (DEU)	Toyota Gazoo SA Hilux	46hr 24min 57sec
4. Mikko Hirvonen (FIN)/Michel Pépin (FRA)	Mini All4 Racing	46hr 27min 28sec
5. Leeroy Poulter (ZAF)/Robert Howie (ZAF)	Toyota Gazoo SA Hilux	46hr 52min 53sec
6. Joan Roma (ESP)/Alex Haro Bravo (ESP)	Mini All4 Racing	47hr 03min 16sec
7. Cyril Despres (FRA)/David Castera (FRA)	Peugeot DKR 2008	47hr 11min 14sec
8. Vladimir Vasilyev (RUS)/Konstantin Zhiltsov (RUS)	Overdrive Toyota Hilux	47hr 13min 03sec
9. Sébastien Loeb (FRA)/Daniel Elena (MCO)	Peugeot DKR 2008	47hr 44min 19sec
10. Harry Hunt (GBR)/Andreas Schulz (DEU)	Mini All4 Racing	48hr 33min 40sec

and confirm a 12th Dakar win by the margin of 34min 58sec from Al-Attiyah. De Villiers rounded off the podium for Toyota after a tussle with Mini's

Hirvonen over the last few days. With six wins on a motorbike, six behind the wheel, Stéphane Peterhansel has to be one of the greatest Dakar competitors in the event's illustrious history. Congratulations, 'Peter'! **4x4**

Top: Victory for Stéphane Peterhansel and Jean-Paul Cottret

Above Left: Giniel de Villiers took third

Below: Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah was runner-up in the Mini All4



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Our 4x4s

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MITSUBISHI L200

Nigel Fryatt, Editor

Spec: Barbarian

Mileage: 1143

MPG: tbc

Recent costs: None

Arrived: December 2015



JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE

Bob Cooke

Spec: 4.7 Limited

Mileage: 109,438

MPG: 21.8

Recent costs: £315 suspension upgrade
work

Arrived: January 2016



TOYOTA RAV4 XT-R

Sue Loy

Spec: 2.0-litre

Mileage: 63,421

MPG: 34

Recent costs: None

Arrived: June 2012



SUZUKI GRAND VITARA

Louise Limb

Spec: 3dr 2.0 TD

Mileage: 94,410

MPG: 40

Recent costs: Just on-going fuel and tyre repairs

Arrived: October 2008



JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE

Hils Everitt, Editor at Large

Spec: Overland WK 3.0-litre

Mileage: 60,057

MPG: 30ish

Recent costs: None - test driving the Suzuki Vitara at present

Arrived: February 2014



NISSAN PATHFINDER SE 2.5

Paul Walton

Spec: SE 2.5

Mileage: 81,104

MPG: 30

Recent costs: £418.44

Arrived: April 2015



HIGHER PURCHASE

Jeep Grand Cherokee

Bob Cooke

It was a job that should have taken two hours - but it took two days. I'm quite used to working with old cars, and well aware that old bolts seize and components can virtually weld themselves in place if they haven't been moved for 20 years, but a couple of things on the Grand Cherokee suggested that the lads who built the car knew a thing or two about making it awkward for the amateur repairman.

Not that my lovely new Grand needed repair - new in the sense that at 15-years old it's the newest off-roader I've ever owned - but on its first off-road outing I'd been horrified at its lack of ground clearance, so much so that I found it difficult to check that the Quadra Drive was still working without grounding the side steps.

American Jeep mod specialists Rough Country do a couple of attractively priced lift kits for the Grand; I'd have liked to have gone for the four-inch lift at £625, but that seemed like a little too tricky for me to tackle as a quick project, because it involves replacement axle control arms, transmission spacers and relocation of the rear damper mounting, whereas the basic two-

inch lift is just a matter of slotting spacers on the standard springs and fitting longer-travel shocks, much of the £315 price being for the Hydro 8000 dampers.

The procedure seemed simple. Jack the car up, undo the sway bar links, release the lower damper mounting and then let the axle down, which if you have the car high enough will allow the springs to more or less just fall out. Simple? In theory, yes, but for some reason or other - cost I suppose - the lower fastenings for the dampers were smooth round-headed studs, and there was no way, even with mole grips, that I could get enough of a grip on them to keep them from spinning as I tried to release their nuts. I have no problem with grinding recalcitrant fasteners away, but there just wasn't enough space to get a machine in there. In desperation I ended up welding a six-inch nail on to the tops of the studs to prevent them from turning, but by the time I'd descended to that level of Birmingham hammer technology, the short winter's day was drawing to a chilly close, so I figured I'd go no further than removing the springs before



retiring for the night. I knew I probably hadn't lifted the car enough, so I screwed in my spring compressors to stop the coils from opening out too much, lowered the axle and manhandled the springs out.

All went well the following morning, I positioned the spacers up against the springs' upper mounting points and fixed them into place with the self-tappers provided; I needed to compress the springs a couple of inches before getting them back in, but that wasn't too much of a chore. With the axle raised again and the compressors removed, it was just a matter of fitting the new dampers - with proper bolts this time - and relocating the sway bar link.

The next problem was the simple task of releasing the lower fixing of the rear dampers. Yes, I know, I should have realised earlier but I was just following the instructions that came with the kit. It said, clearly, "using 18mm and 15mm spanners, remove the lower fastener." Doesn't that



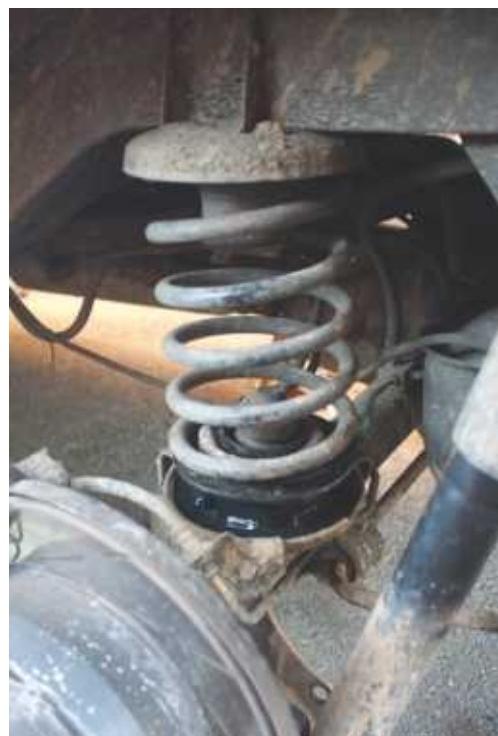
Spanning the sway bar link apart - note the spring compressors in position



Studs holding the damper down - were they never to be replaced?



The front spring with its spacer - and proper bolts on the damper



The back spring on its spacer - without the rubber isolator

sound to you like a straightforward nut and bolt fixing? As with any nut and bolt I tried shifting the nut first, it also happened to be on the more easily accessed side, but it seemed well rusted in. Then I tried shifting the bolt, but because of the awkward angle and the fact that I had to move the spanner upwards - which meant I couldn't use body weight to help budge it - I gave up and reached for my trusty angle grinder. I was three

quarters of the way through the nut before it dawned on me that it was actually a captive nut. What a plonker! Nevertheless, too late to stop so I cut it away. No real problem since I have a good selection of stainless steel replacement bolts in the workshop, but an annoying lapse of understanding all the same. The other side came away easily enough - since releasing the bolt meant heaving the spanner downwards, I just jumped on it and the bolt came free with a satisfying crack.

After that the job was easy enough, lower the axle, remove the spring, position the spacer and put the spring back. Except that the spring is seated in a rubber bushing described as an isolator, and the instructions said to discard this as it wasn't needed. It seemed odd to have the metal springs riding directly against the steel spacer, but I assumed the suppliers knew what they were talking about, so I bolted everything back in place

and took the car for a test drive. Clatter, clatter, rattle - I could hardly hear myself think. A call to Dave at Llama 4x4, who supply the Rough Country kits, produced the answer - the spacers were once made of polyurethane, they'd switched to steel to give a more accurately guaranteed two-inch lift but forgot to change the instructions. So - off came the springs again, easier this time since I'd already freed up and copper-greased all the fixings, the rubber isolators went back and everything went beautifully quiet again.

The Grand now not only looks more purposeful but is much more competent off-road, not only because it has more ground clearance but the axles have more articulation. A day at the Slindon off-road site served to reassure me that I could get the Quadra Drive working without grounding the side steps. Next: Off come the side steps, to be replaced by more sensible rock sliders. **BC**



The Grand would never have cleared this little hump without the lift

OUR 4X4S

Running reports



WEATHER WATCHING

Suzuki Vitara SZ5

Hils Everitt

With a few more miles under my belt in our long-term test of the new Suzuki Vitara I have found a few more details to add to pros and cons columns.

Yes, the colour is still fab and I love the quietness of the somewhat lacking in excitement 1.6-litre petrol unit, plus it is a lovely cruiser at full pelt on the motorway. I also like the lovely responsive feedback to the steering, which has, perversely, a light touch to it. You'd think, then, that it would be a bit woolly in real terms, but it isn't at all. Top marks Suzuki engineers, you've scored high points there.

Lower points, sadly, have to be awarded to the climate control system. Without A/C on, this Vitara steams up at the drop of a hat. I was driving home on a very wet and windy night to Kent from Norfolk. I don't tend to think about putting on the A/C on a cold, wintry night in any vehicle, as you expect the standard demisting vents to do their job. Unfortunately, not in this case. Even with the fan on max power and control switched to windscreens we steamed up pretty quickly. There is no windscreens-only setting; the windscreens share air flow with the footwell vent. There is, however, a windscreens 'demist' button akin to the rear window demister,

which is essential to use in these incidences. This automatically brings on the A/C, which did clear the fog away while we stopped in a very welcome layby. Even when the windscreen is clear on pulling away and there is no air con, the Suzuki steams up incredibly quickly. Side windows get a layer of mist and so do the rears. We have been experiencing very wet and humid weather lately, so that doesn't help, but my Grand Cherokee demists pretty quickly in comparison with the standard climate settings.

What didn't help on the dark and stormy night on the A11 was the headlamp setting. Now the A11 is a very badly lit road, i.e. there are no lights at all and it cuts through farmland and little habitation, so there is no subsidiary lighting from nearby housing estates. It's pretty damned dark and on a vicious night pretty daunting. The track of the Suzuki's beam is too low and nearside orientated for me. Our editor – a tall chap – didn't find this problem, but both me – being smaller – and my husband of average height have done. This Suzuki model has no headlamp alignment dial. Like with the clock last month, I had to resort to consulting the manual just in case I was missing something. It told me that headlight adjustment isn't standard. It has made some dark road driving a bit nervy. And you

can't always use full beam to rectify this, obviously. If I owned one of these Vitara models I would have to visit the dealer and get the headlamps adjusted.

But back to the very good points. Well, I like the manual gearbox, which is supple and slick and the hill hold control system. It lasts about two seconds to help those who refuse to apply the handbrake on a hill and do a proper hill start, rather than sitting on the brakes and inevitably rolling back into your path. Drivers do this all the time I find, and it drives me mad! It's a shockingly bad habit performed by thousands, so at least modern technology stops that horror. But you have to remember that it only lasts a short time so if you don't pull away within two seconds you are going to drift backwards.

Mod cons such as satnav are there on our model and it's got digital radio, which is a must for me these days. The rear-parking camera remains a big favourite,

as it is so clear and very useful.

The Suzuki in the daytime in good conditions is a great little drive, as long as you aren't someone who wants to race off the lights. We haven't had a chance to test its snow-driving prowess - which is what most 4x4 owners are bothered about these days - as the south of England has only had a mild dusting which lasted two hours one Sunday morning. Our friends in the north, Wales and Scotland would no doubt put the Vitara to good use. It's a good-looking vehicle in that metallic orange, and I am pleased it has the 'snow' setting and 'lock' plus selectable Hill Descent Control. I learnt to drive off-road in an SJ, and this is the closest we will get to those traditional Suzuki off-road roots. But then times have truly changed. **HE**





FLOWER POWER

Mitsubishi L200 Barbarian

Nigel Fryatt

This is why you own a pick-up. It's a grim, grotty, cold, and very wet day and you have to transport a load of heavy, muddy and awkward large flowerpots. That was the task in hand last weekend, planned for a few weeks and it couldn't be delayed. Of course, that meant that the day would start with heavy rain, and the forecast predicting that it was only going to get worse!

Using a 'standard' SUV and you would have ended up with a messy and muddy interior, no matter how hard you tried to avoid it. With the Mitsubishi, however, it was a much simpler task. Our test vehicle is fitted with an excellent Mountain Top roller cover. It does the job well enough, but is somewhat awkward to unlock. As an aside, we have reported this month of a new top from pick-up manufacturer Isuzu, which when fitted, means that the locks actually work with the vehicle's central locking. This, surely, has to be the next step with a model like our Barbarian and its Mountain Top roller. Fiddling about, in the cold sleety rain, with a tiny key and then pressing down the plunger lock seems completely incongruous with a machine that has plush leather seats, hi tech stereo and other

comforts usually found in far plusher machines. The roller top's lock may well ease with use, but it felt to me like unlocking my 1963 Mini door with those wafer-thin British Leyland keys!

Once unlocked, it slides back well enough and we unhooked the strap that allows you to pull the cover back without needing to stretch too far, as it was rather in the way. I was a little concerned that when accelerating, or generally driving up hills, that the roller cover might want to slide back and promptly decapitate the plants! To avoid this I took the strap inside the rear cabin and clipped it to the headrest; job done and plants safe!

We used some old cardboard boxes on the floor of the load bed, despite the fact that it has a tough plastic cover. The flattened cardboard did mean that we could load up the heavier items and slide them into place. The L200 does have some nice powerful hydraulic dampers on the rear fold down hatch. This gave me a strong sense of security that it will take the weight of the heavier pots. It was indeed impressive just how many we got in and the journey to their new home was without drama, more importantly, we transported a dirty wet cargo, yet kept the



Rather surprisingly, the whole of the front screen has to tilt to allow you to insert a CD. It looks rather vulnerable to us



interior of the vehicle spotlessly clean and tidy.

We are really getting used to the L200 now, and looking forward to taking it on its first off-road adventure later this month. The one aspect that is taking a little effort to understand, however, is the 'infotainment' system. Having bought the latest David Bowie CD, I was looking forward to listening to it on the drive home, yet I could not work out where on earth you insert the disc! Well, of course, I didn't look at the manual... Eventually, I saw a button on the screen that said 'open' and low and behold, the whole front face of the screen tilts to allow you to insert the

disc. It works fine, but seems unnecessarily cumbersome to us, and rather awkward. Once inserted, you have to close the front again before you can play the CD and use the stereo controls. Of course, many will say that putting a CD in a vehicle's stereo system is so old-fashioned; Bluetooth MP3 and digital radio is surely the way to go. That may be true, but some of use will continue to do this and when 'open' it seems a very vulnerable position and you wonder how well it will survive five, 10 years of consistent usage. But then, that's probably not why you own a pick-up, it's the effortless load carrying that's the real reason. **NF**

Your 4x4 Life

BUYING, OWNING & LIVING WITH



UNHINDERED

Usually, we get sent contenders for Your 4x4 Life, but sometimes we just discover them! This month, Bob Cooke was out off-roading at one of his favourite venues when he spotted a vehicle that we just had to include. We'll let Bob take up the story:

"Something was definitely happening over on the eastern side of the Slindon off-road site - it sounded like someone jack-hammering up a stretch of concrete paving, but it turned out to be nothing more than the hard-working diesel engine in a little red off-roader waving its wheels in the air as it charged over and through a series of humps and ditches. Closer inspection revealed it to be something of a rarity - a Mahindra Apache. At the wheel was Chichester-based James Taylor, taking the licence-built Jeep CJ3AB on its first off-road outing since being recovered - rather

expensively - from a friend's barn.

"When we eventually managed to stop James from enjoying the impressive off-road antics of his old Indian truck, he explained: "I paid £400 for it. It had been sitting in the barn for 10 years or so, but when we sorted out the battery it started, first time." That was the easy bit: "It then cost me another £1200 to get it through the MOT. It needed quite a bit of welding to the chassis and body to get it roadworthy." The result, however, was obviously worth the outlay. Resplendent in its still acceptably smart red paintwork and with its screen down just for the fun of it, with its short wheelbase and excellent axle articulation the Mahindra had no trouble tackling some of the toughest obstacles Slindon could lay in its path, helped of course by the grippy Insa Turbo Dakar mud tyres fitted to its spoked steel wheels.





P82: MARKET NEWS



P84: CLUB NEWS



P88: ODDBALLS

"Probably the wackiest thing about the Mahindras that were imported into the UK through the 90s is that they were made by Bombay Indians but branded as if they were American Indians - hence you could buy a Mahindra Indian Chief, a Mahindra Brave or, as in this case, an Apache. Though a copy of the original Jeep, the Mahindra used a licence-built Peugeot diesel engine, 2.1-litres and producing about 70bhp, driving through a four-speed manual transmission, with selectable four-wheel drive and a 2.46 reduction through the low range. On the inside the Mahindra is every bit as basic as the original Jeep, though it does sport an impressive array of dials and colourful repeaters, and James has sensibly chosen to keep the original seat upholstery undamaged by fitting protective covers."

Imports of these rugged early Mahindras stopped in the late 90s, mainly because they were just too rough and ready to appeal in the more sophisticated UK market. For enthusiasts like James, however, a revitalised Mahindra makes an ideal high-fun, go-anywhere off-road plaything."

Would you like your 4x4 featured in these pages? It's simple, just email the Editor some pictures and a few details and he'll do the rest. It doesn't matter if your 4x4 is old or new, modified or standard, rare or regular, remember it's Your 4x4 Life. Send your vehicle in to: 4x4.ed@kelsey.co.uk. We look forward to hearing from you. **4x4**

The smile on James's face says it all! Grippy Insa Turbos transfer the Peugeot's torque



Marketwatch

MONTHLY 4x4 PRICE REVIEW



One worth bidding over the top for



£5100 - not bad for a 20-year old truck



A quick £2000 profit for the buyer

LONG LIVE DEFENDER!

Land Rovers have always held their values well but, as Bob Cooke explains, that's likely to be even more the case with the Defender as supply can no longer keep up with demand

The Land Rover Defender may no longer be in production but that hasn't hit second-hand values - in fact it's likely to see them rising to absurd heights. The high demand for Defenders was typified at a recent Brightwells auction where a batch of eight Defenders sold for an average of 134 per cent of book value, and that includes a high-mileage one that looked a bit tatty and only attracted 74 per cent of book value. If nothing else it suggested the demand for these sturdy trucks has rapidly outstripped the trade guide price, because although on paper the prices bid were higher than expected, some of the purchasers would have driven away with real bargains. Among them was a stunning red 56-plated 90 Td5 Hard Top with 37,000 miles, tow bar and a long MOT that went for £15,000, nearly twice the expected trade value, but a bargain buy all the same since we've seen similar low-mileage Defenders asking over £20,000 retail. In the same league was a blue 2000 X-reg one-owner 90 Td5 with 76,000 miles, also with a tow bar and a long MOT, which went for £6800, 174 per cent of book value, but again a worthwhile purchase compared with the £8000 being asked for similar cars retail. Interestingly newer cars didn't do quite as well for the sellers - a 2012 90 Hard Top with the 2.2 TDci engine and 15,000 miles sold for £14,150, which we

spotted later on a dealer forecourt priced at £16,450, and a blue 2014 Hard Top with 29,000 miles went for £14,800, admittedly with a relatively high mileage but good value since there are many 2014 Defenders asking over £30,000 retail. It seems the older the better - a 1996 110 300TDi County Station Wagon with 145,000 miles went for £5100, a 1993 90 Tdi with 141,000 miles went for £2200. It would seem that the best place to acquire a Defender is at auction, where buyers are mainly dealers seeking stock for their outlets, and therefore bids shouldn't exceed the trade value - as a private buyer you should be able to outbid a dealer and still get a car for less than retail. Two points to watch - the first is that auction houses often require a buyers' fee that could add 15 per cent or so to your bid, and secondly there's no point buying at auction unless you're getting the car cheap.

PHYSICAL FOOTFALL

Meanwhile with new car sales still rising, in turn seeing more good quality second-hand cars being dumped on dealer forecourts, the approaching summer could see prices easing, though not as much as we'd like. The problem is that the flood of good used cars is being matched by a surge in demand for good nearly-new cars, so dealers are having to balance attractive deals on new cars while still

trying to keep their second-hand sales profitable. One interesting development is that while on-line used car retailers are claiming record numbers of hits, dealers are also reporting a significant increase in "physical footfall", the new trade buzzword for people actually visiting forecourts. That could be because it's difficult to maximise the trade-in value of your current car when dealing with an impersonal internet service - on-line car buying operations aren't in it as a public service, while a mainstream car dealer eager to encourage turnover may give you a better allowance to encourage you to buy a new car.

One of the key marketing ploys helping to increase new car sales is the personal contract purchase, requiring a deposit followed by monthly repayments over two years, after which you either pay the balance and keep the car, or continue the plan with a new car. This only works if you keep the car unmarked and stay within the agreed mileage, but look out for deals offering zero per cent finance with the PCP - it won't apply to all, but it does mean you'll end up paying no more than the list price. Some dealers are offering discounts on new cars, which they're disguising as 'dealer deposit contributions.' Jeep is offering a particularly good deal on the new Cherokee, with a £3000 'contribution' and zero per cent finance which does eventually give you a car for £3000 less than the list price.

FOCUS ON: HYUNDAI TUCSON

GO FOR: Premium AIM TO PAY: £26,000

The original Hyundai Tucson was a rather dumpy-looking vehicle, something of an ugly duckling in the sense that in spite of its dull appearance it offered good equipment and reasonable performance at a really good price. Something of that value appeal follows through into the reborn Tucson, though it's no longer a low-budget option. Bearing in mind how dated the original Tucson appeared, it's understandable that Hyundai chose to replace it with a much more modern design, though the blander-named ix35 also lost any 4x4 image with its dynamic sports hatch styling; the current Tucson builds on the urban styling of the ix35, presumably in the hope that the Tucson name will serve to rekindle SUV appeal. Like the ix35 predecessor, the Tucson is primarily a 2WD urban vehicle, with 4WD available with the 2.0 CRDi turbodiesel tuned either for 134bhp or 183bhp, and the 175bhp 1.6 T-GDi petrol engine. Four-wheel drive is a background system that feeds the front wheels, adding drive to the rears only when necessary, although it does have a 'lock' position ensuring drive to the rear. The main appeal as a family estate is the larger interior, a comfortable five-seater with impressive luggage space; the tailgate lifts to reveal the widest boot opening in class, with low load height and a two-level boot floor. All versions have a good-value equipment level including DAB digital radio with MP3 compatibility, Bluetooth connectivity, air conditioning, automatic headlights and 16-inch alloys, but for all-wheel drive you need at least the SE Nav which adds dual zone climate control, 17-inch alloys, rear parking sensors, heated front seats, lane keep assist, projector headlamps with static cornering lights and a new-generation 8-inch touchscreen satnav with Tom Tom Live Services, the screen also showing the reversing camera image.

This version also has the technology to read road speed signs and display the speed limit. Look out for good deals on nearly-new 2015 examples, many will be preregistered cars which dealers are eager to move on before the March plate-change when demand will be for the new 2016 plate. For instance, with the 136-horse turbodiesel the list price of a manual SE Nav is £26,175, but Platinum Hyundai of Frome (01373 316938) were offering a 1000-mile example in Phantom Black metallic on a 65 plate for £21,999, Autoworld of Chesterfield (01246 494811) had a similar car also on a 65 plate with the 185-horse engine and just delivery mileage for £1000 more, a significant reduction over the £28,395 list price.

For more luxury choose the Premium equipment level, which includes leather upholstery with heated seats, front parking sensors, rear cross traffic alert, automatic windscreens wipers with rain sensor and 19-inch alloys. Additional safety features with this specification include autonomous emergency braking and blind spot detection. With the 134bhp engine this is listed at £28,425, with the more powerful diesel £29,295, though Coupers of St Albans (01727 249832) had a preregistered one of these in Platinum Silver with five miles on it on a 65 plate for £25,785. There's even more luxury and convenience in the Premium SE, which has keyless entry and smart start, heated steering wheel, panoramic sunroof, power tailgate and, in the automatic transmission version, smart parking assist. Johnsons of Liverpool (01513 828152) were advertising a range of new Tucson on 2015 plates at over £6000 off the list price, including a Premium SE with 150 miles, list price £31,825, at £26,795. Take advantage of these pre-plate change offers, because not all Hyundai dealers are offering low-deposit PCPs or zero per cent finance on 4x4 versions of the Tucson.



Buying Guide Archive

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Audi Q7

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Daihatsu Terios 1997-2005

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Jeep Grand Cherokee 1999-2004

Issue July 2013

Jeep Grand Cherokee 2005-2010

Issue September 2015

Jeep Wrangler TJ

Issue October 2014

Land Rover Discovery 3

Issue September 2014

Land Rover Freelander

Issue February 2013

Land Rover Freelander 2

Issue April 2014

Nissan Pathfinder

Issue October 2015

Nissan Qashqai

Issue March 2016

Porsche Cayenne 2003-2010

Issue February 2016

Range Rover 1970-1995

Issue January 2013

Range Rover Evoque

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Range Rover Sport 2005-2012

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Skoda Yeti

Issue March 2015

Suzuki Grand Vitara

Issue May 2015

Suzuki Jimny

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Toyota Land Cruiser 2003-2009

Issue December 2014

Toyota Land Cruiser 2010-2015

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Toyota RAV4

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Volkswagen Touareg

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COMPARISON BUYERS' GUIDES

BMW X5 v Volvo XC90

Issue May 2013

Honda CR-V v Nissan X-Trail

Issue April 2012

LR Defender v Jeep Wrangler

Issue August 2012

Mitsubishi Shogun v Grand Cherokee

Issue May 2012

Porsche Cayenne v VW Touareg

Issue April 2013

Range Rover v Mercedes-Benz ML

Issue November 2012

Seven-seater SUVs

Issue March 2014

Suzuki Jimny v Mitsubishi Pinin

Issue September 2012

Club World

MONTHLY CLUB ACTION

What's your club doing? *Louise Limb* goes clubbing to find out what is happening in the 4x4 Club World. If your club has news or forthcoming events it would like us to promote, then just email: **4x4.ed@kelsey.co.uk** - marking your message **Club News**



Red Rose LRC says 'tat-ta' to Defender

WHEN SIMON KERFOOT'S phone rang at 2.00pm on Thursday 28 January, there were precious few hours in which to try and arrange a line up at the BBC's flagship studios at Media City, Salford. Friday 29th January was of course the day the last Land Rover Defender would roll off the production line (see the Editor's story on page 18) and Kate, a producer at the BBC was trying to find Land Rover enthusiasts at short notice. After a spot of searching she came across Simon's business number at Clayton Garage and the Red Rose Land Rover Club Scrutineer was tasked with assembling as many Defenders as he could in time for an early start on Friday morning. Club Secretary, Alison Spowell put out the word on social media and no less than 10 Defenders and their owners stepped up, the Kerfoot's 110 double cab pick-up towing the family's treasured Series I 80in, once the pride and joy of the late club chairman, Brian Kerfoot.

As Alison's message reminded club members, they needed to be on Salford Quays and looking presentable at 7.15am, ready to appear live on television at 7.50am. While on air they'd also have to be prepared

to be interviewed so as well as sprucing their Land Rovers up, the volunteers would also have to be articulate before 8.00 am. With his contacts in the off-road racing world, Simon also managed to persuade Mike Moran, currently the Britpart British Cross Country Champion, to come along with his daughter, Harriet. Mike was one of the founding members of Red Rose Land Rover Club and has supported it ever since. Mike came in the pleasingly fettled and now immaculate Defender 90 that he'd toured Iceland in, its 200Tdi engine transplant kept tuned by its expert owner. Meanwhile Harriet was at the wheel of her new 110, a 21st birthday present few would refuse and with a mere 400 miles on its clock.

The next day, while VIPs made their way to Solihull, Simon led the bleary-eyed Red Rose group from his Clayton le Woods garage to Salford on a very raw Friday morning. It was still dark when they arrived and parked the vehicles in a horseshoe, the Series I staying on the trailer and the producer requiring a spot of education about its vital role in the line up. The three Kerfoot brothers, Simon, Michael and Phillip and the Moran family were joined by

Robert Moulding, Chrissie Connolly, Neil Wright and Andrew Robertson, with 18-year old Tom Gray, the club website and magazine editor taking photos. Following an introduction by a journalist from *Auto Express*, each person gave a snippet of opinion to the interviewer during the few minutes the feature was broadcast live to the nation. Michael called the Defender the workhorse while Harriet reminded everyone how much they were part of a family; such is the fondness Britain retains for its 'proper' Land Rover.

Tom's 90, 'Beastie' is a testament to just what a youngster can do on a limited budget and the Land Rover he built from scratch with suspension lift and other modifications was given the publicity it deserved on national television. Tom has recently moved from Tyro competition with Red Rose LRC to Road Taxed Vehicle trials and we hope his enthusiasm continues, young people like Tom keeping both the Land Rover club scene and the Defender alive and on the road.

Photographs Tom Gray and for more information on the Lancashire club contact Red Rose LRC at www.landroverclub.co.uk



Scottish pride

REMINDING US THAT there is more to JLR than the Defender and that off-road driving is not necessarily the work of the devil, the Discovery Owners' Club celebrate the marque with news that Land Rover Experience Scotland received a Five Star Activity Centre award from the national tourism organisation VisitScotland in 2015.

The Quality Tourism Advisor from the organisation took part in a one-hour session at the loch side site near Dunkeld, describing it as 'superb fun' and praised the Land Rover Experience (LRE) for its particularly warm welcome and friendly, knowledgeable and engaging team. Graham Clark, the proprietor at LRE Scotland was delighted and proud of members of staff who had put in a huge amount of effort to reach the standards required for the award. Not only does the Butterstone Loch site boast a wild Highland estate with all the off-road challenges one would expect, but LRE Scotland were also applauded for their environmental awareness. The beautiful cover photo on the February 2016 issue of Discourse depicting an LRE Scotland Discovery among the bluebells says it all.

Meanwhile, this issue also pictures Ben Saunders, the polar explorer as Land Rover Brand Ambassador, cooling off in JLR's Cold Climate

Chamber preparation for the expedition to trace Scott's footsteps, while reminding us that his Discovery 4 played an important part in his training, taking him to hard to reach places all over Europe and Greenland.

In a tale closer to reality for many Discovery owners, Adrian, AKA 'Fieryred', recalls how a copy of Meccano Monthly magazine he read as a child in the late 1940s featured a photo of a prototype Land Rover. He vowed he would eventually own one and after a Series IIA and a pre-Defender 90 Turbo diesel, bought a 'P' registered seven seat Discovery Tdi followed by the 'W' registered Discovery, seven seat TD5 GS he now runs. It had only 42,000 miles on the clock when he bought it with a full service history and repaired sunroof and seemed very much like a limousine to Adrian.

Andy #5402 has more of a challenge on his hands with G436GUY. Rescued from the scrap merchant, the early Discovery has much work and investment ahead to become a gleaming Land Rover again. Although the 200Tdi engine started first time, the vehicle had been off-road and used as a farm hack for some years, everything below the wheel arches being either rusted beyond recognition or broken, 'about a ton of farm soil' lodged beneath the body and the axles and suspension badly damaged. We look forward to seeing it running again!

Irish 4x4 off-road fun

ROS WOODHAM, EDITOR of *Legend*, the journal of the Land Rover Series One Club and contributor to this very magazine, doesn't confine her tastes to the original Land Rover. As well as designing the great looking Built 2 Last for the Series 2 Club and Windscreen, the publication of the Military Vehicle trust, she has been taking time off from working on her Land Rover Santana to enjoy herself among other makes of 4x4, having a spot of fun in a bog near her home in Ireland. Together with 'some mates on a wet Irish Sunday' the group comprised Ros Woodham and Jimmy Hayes in a finely looked after 1993 Toyota Land Cruiser Prado 70-Series. Tom Burke took his recently restored 1988 G-Wagon out for a spin and Jon and Mary Hayes piloted the 2013 Defender 90. Eddy Druyts was engaged as a guide around some private forestry tracks in County Limerick and lots of gentle greenlane fun was had by all.



Let's Go Off-Road

WHERE TO GO TO ENJOY YOUR 4X4

PAY AND PLAY SITES

Here are some of the best places to go off-road in the UK. We would always advise that you call to check dates and times. If you have a site that ought to be included, email us on 4x4.ed@kelsey.co.uk and mark your email **4x4 PAY AND PLAY**

ASH 4X4

Ash 4x4 Ltd have a Pay and Play site at Chirk Quarry, LL14 5AH, near Shrewsbury. Check the website as the venue may vary between Hawkstone Park and Chirk Quarry. There are no toilets, food or other amenities, just very good off-roading. Call Billy Hilton on 07581 030331 or go to the website: www.ash4x4.com

AVALANCHE ADVENTURE

Run by Avalanche Adventure, this venue is at Sibbercroft, near Market Harborough. Pay and Play days and other 4x4/off-road activities. Give them a call on 01858 880613 or look for more details on: www.avalancheadventure.co.uk

BALA OFFROAD LLANNERCH YR ERYR

The Llannerch yr Eryr farm and off-road site is a very popular and well-known pay and play site. Spectacular views over Bala lake and surrounding mountains. Always ring to check the weather in the winter months. £30 a day, £20 after 1pm. Call: 07850 800709. www.balaoffroad.co.uk

BLUE LIGHT OFF ROAD CLUB

This off-road club operates in southern England, and is open to all 4x4s. Prices vary, but is usually £45 per vehicle and the Pay and Play site is often at the Army Training area at Bagshot, Surrey. Go to: www.bluelightoffroadclub.co.uk or contact John Amos on 07805 656947 or email: blorc@hotmail.com

BURES PIT

Large sand pit quarry in North Essex. The prices are £30 per vehicle, but that can include up to four passengers. There's a catering van on site. To learn more contact Terry and Karl at events@bures-pit.co.uk or to learn more, go to: www.bures-pit.co.uk

DEVIL'S PIT

Devil's Pit is 60 acres of different courses (novice, experienced and expert) at Barton-Le-Clay, Nr Luton, MK45 4LG (A6) Bedfordshire (OS Grid ref: TL078297). £26 per vehicle. Children (under 16) are free. Toilets and catering, first aid and recovery facilities. Tel: 01582 883349 Email: devils.pit@virgin.net www.devilspit.co.uk

ESSEX, ROCHFORD & DISTRICT 4X4

Essex, Rochford & District 4x4 Club have a 4x4 site located on Creeksea Ferry Road, Canewdon, Essex, open on the second Sunday of every month for both members and non-members, check out: www.4x4er.co.uk

FRICKLEY OFF-ROAD CENTRE

Frickley Off-Road Centre is near Doncaster in South Yorkshire, DN5 7BU and includes climbs, hollows, woodland and rock climbs suitable for the novice to the experienced off-roader. £25 per vehicle, all road-legal 4x4s welcome. Call Charlie: 07836 544335 Email: offroad@frickley4x4.co.uk www.frickley4x4.co.uk

ALL YEAR AROUND SLINDON SAFARI

If you are looking for a Pay and Play site 'down south', then look no further than John Morgan's Slindon Safari option, near Arundel in West Sussex. This is a popular site, open to 4x4 enthusiasts on the second and fourth Sunday of each month (but always call and check for confirmation). Entry is a reasonable £30 per vehicle, with Quad bikes at £15 per bike, for over 16-year olds only. There are courses of varying difficulty set out, right from off-road beginners to some quite interesting 'advanced' routes! Marshals are there to help and advise, and spectators are welcome (£3 parking per vehicle). This is a venue that the magazine's very own Bob Cooke regularly enjoys, so you may well see him there with his new Jeep Grand Cherokee. To find out more, you can email John at johnmorgan@4x4driving.co.uk, or call 01903 812195/07802 582826 and do tell John you heard about it in 4x4 Magazine!



UK EVENTS DIARY

MARCH

6

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

GWYNEDD

Bala Off Road

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Frickley

WEST SUSSEX

Piccadilly Wood

ORGANISED DRIVES

4x4 ADVENTURE TOURS take to Salisbury Plain. Cost is £60 per vehicle per day. Check www.4x4adventuretours.co.uk

13

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

BERKSHIRE

Harbour Hill

WEST SUSSEX

Slindon Safari

19/20

ORGANISED DRIVES

4x4 ADVENTURE TOURS take to Salisbury Plain. Cost is £60 per vehicle per day. Check www.4x4adventuretours.co.uk

4X4 YORKSHIRE offer regular greenlaning trips. This weekend it's Wales but call 01757 638479 to find out more, or check out their website on: www.yorkshire4x4specialists.com

LANES TRACKS AND TRAILS offering a weekend valleys tour of the Taimar and Tavy. Call Jim Hancock on 07855 213355 to find out more, or go to: www.lanestracksandtrails.co.uk

20

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

BEDFORDSHIRE

Devils Pit

ESSEX

Bures Pit

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Frickley

27

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

WEST SUSSEX

Slindon Safari

29/31

ORGANISED DRIVES

LANES TRACKS AND TRAILS offering a weekend valleys tour of the Taimar and Tavy. Call Jim Hancock on 07855 213355 to find out more, or go to: www.lanestracksandtrails.co.uk

APRIL

1

MAY ISSUE OF 4X4 MAGAZINE ON SALE

The May issue looks at all the very latest options for Modifying your 4x4. We look at suspension tweaks, engine mods, wheels and tyres, underbody suspension and much, much more. Be warned, they'll be something here to tempt you into getting that credit card out of your wallet. We also have an up to date Buying Guide for the Suzuki Jimny; visit a new 'official' Jeep Off-road Driving Centre; and have an adventure trip in search on the Northern Lights in a 4x4 van! There's also a Willys 'jeep' off-road vehicle, the like of which you've never seen. All this and the usual regulars in the May issue of the magazine. To ensure you never miss an issue, why not subscribe? You'll save money and have the mag delivered direct to your door. All the latest offers are on page 50 of this issue.

We aim to make this feature the most comprehensive off-road events' calendar published, and you have to admit, there are a lot of events listed here! However, we know we can do better, but need to hear from you, your club, association or travel company. If you are planning something, send us the details and a couple of pictures and we will highlight your event, off-road day, expedition or weekend jolly in these pages. Just send to 4x4.ed@kelsey.co.uk mark the subject of the email: **4x4 CALENDAR**

3

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

Gwynedd	Bala Off Road
South Yorkshire	Frickley
West Sussex	Piccadilly Wood

10

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

Berkshire	Harbour Hill
West Sussex	Slindon Safari

17

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

Bedfordshire	Devils Pit
South Yorkshire	Frickley

23/24

ORGANISED DRIVES

LANES TRACKS AND TRAILS will be holding their greenlaning event around East Cornwall. Call Jim Hancock on 07855 213355 to find out more, or go to: www.lanestracksandtrails.co.uk

24

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

West Sussex	Slindon Safari
--------------------	----------------

30/1

ORGANISED DRIVES

YORKSHIRE 4x4 are planning one of their excellent weekend greenlaning drives. Always well organised, this weekend it's over the Yorkshire Dales and Moors. Check out: www.yorkshire4x4treks.co.uk

MAY

1

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

Gwynedd	Bala Off Road
South Yorkshire	Frickley
West Sussex	Piccadilly Wood

8

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

Berkshire	Harbour Hill
West Sussex	Slindon Safari

15

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

Bedfordshire	Devils Pit
South Yorkshire	Frickley

21/22

ORGANISED DRIVES

YORKSHIRE 4x4 are planning one of their excellent weekend greenlaning drives. This weekend it's the Lake District. Check out: www.yorkshire4x4treks.co.uk

22

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

West Sussex	Slindon Safari
--------------------	----------------

JUNE

5

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

Gwynedd	Bala Off Road
West Sussex	Piccadilly Wood

12

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

Berkshire	Harbour Hill
West Sussex	Slindon Safari

18/19

ORGANISED DRIVES

YORKSHIRE 4x4 are planning one of their excellent weekend greenlaning drives. This weekend it's through the Welsh countryside. Check out: www.yorkshire4x4treks.co.uk

19

PAY AND PLAY DAYS

Bedfordshire	Devils Pit
---------------------	------------

JUNE MALVERN LR & 4X4 SPARES WEEKEND

The very popular Malvern 4x4 Spares weekend will this year be held over the weekend of the 4th and 5th of June. Venue is the Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR13 6NW. There will be the usual club and vehicle displays with the excellent trade and autojumble sales areas. This year there will be a display of Challenge vehicles. Advanced adult tickets are £7.50; on the day entry will be £8.50. A full adult weekend ticket is £14. Accompanied children under the age of 15 are free. Camping is available from Friday 1pm, through to Monday 11am. Prices, including show admission are: Family weekend (two adults) advanced £40, at show £45; single weekend (one adult) advanced £25, £30 at show. Under 15s are free. If you want to have an autojumble trade stand, call 016974 51882 for more details. Check out the website on: www.4x4sparesday.co.uk



HARBOUR HILL

Harbour Hill, near Aldermaston A340. Non-members £30 (£10 membership, £20 for the day). Wheel washing, catering and toilets available. Call: 07887 533168 Email: withoutaclub@yahoo.co.uk www.4x4-withoutaclub.co.uk

KIRTON OFF ROAD CENTRE

Kirton Off Road Centre is a massive 600 acre site near Kirton Lindsey, Lincolnshire, DN21 4JH. Standard days are £40, and there are often camping weekends at £75 inclusive. Check their website or call for more details. Call Paul: 07907 450974 Email: paul@korc.co.uk www.kirtonoffroadcentre.co.uk

LANDCRAFT

Offering the chance to get to some superb parts of Snowdonia, David Mitchell's experienced outfit offer some great Adventure drives, and for those more 'adventurous', there's always Adventure Plus. Paying on the day is £60 (inc VAT), pre-book and save £10. Call 07831 258864 Email: info@landcraft.co.uk www.landcraft4x4.co.uk

MUDGY BOTTOM 4X4

The Muddy Bottom 4x4 site is located in the heart of the New Forest (postcode SO43 7FL). All pay and play days have an entry fee of £25, and you need to be a member (day membership is only £1, or annual membership £10). The site has a jet wash, burger van, picnic area and free recovery. Please note that no kinetic ropes are permitted on site, and that you will have to jet wash your vehicle before you leave to avoid leaving any mud on the roads. To find out more contact Carla on 07754 940783 or 07801 088203. Email: muddybottom4x4@aol.com www.muddybottom4x4.com

PARKWOOD 4X4 (TONG)

Parkwood is at Tong village, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD4 0RR. Open 10-4pm, catering, toilets, first aid, vehicle wash, £35 per vehicle including passengers - providing that there are correct fitting seatbelts. Call: 0113 285 4356 Email: info@parkwood4x4.co.uk www.parkwood4x4.co.uk

PICCADILLY WOOD 4X4

This site is operational on the first Sunday of every month and based at Colwood Lane, Bolney, West Sussex RH17 5QQ (just off A23). Open between 10am – 4 pm, the cost is £30 per vehicle. There is free tractor recovery, toilets and the all important tea van! You can contact them on 01444 461690/07984 543886, or to find out more, email: jperver@btinternet.com or go to: www.piccadillywood4x4.co.uk

SILVERDALE

Explore this site at Hayling Wood, Silverdale, Stoke-on-Trent, ST5 6QQ which has 53 acres of steep wooded tracks, water holes and mud! £25 per vehicle. Open from 10am until 4pm, road taxed vehicles. Tel: 07970 286881. Email: exploreoffroad@hotmail.com www.exploreoffroad.com

SLINDON SAFARI

Slindon Safari, near Arundel, West Sussex, 10am until 4pm; £30 per vehicle, Quads welcome, £15, all riders 16+ and there's a 10mph speed limit. Routes for beginners and more advanced. Call: 01903 812195 or 07802 582826 Email: johnmorgan@4x4driving.co.uk www.4x4driving.co.uk

TRANS PENNINE OFF ROAD EVENTS

Club runs Pay and Play sites at various venues in Derbyshire including Holymoorside, near Chesterfield, S42 7EG; Biggin Quarry, Ashbourne, DE6 1QU and Padley Wood Farm, S45 8EL. Gates open at 9.00am and costs are £20 per vehicle. Catering and toilet facilities. Email: events@tpore.co.uk Check out: www.tporco.co.uk

ODDBALLS

FORGOTTEN 4X4S



Mahindra Thar

It might look like the same Jeep-style Mahindra that's been in production for decades, but the Thar is almost all-new – and sounds rather good. Paul Guinness explains more



Remember when Mahindra sold 4x4s here in the UK? If you were around in the early 1990s, you may well recall the Indian manufacturer's attempt at selling its ancient Jeep-type offering, giving it various different badges – including Marksman, Indian Chief and Indian Brave – for the British market. As a derivation of the 1953-on Jeep CJ-3B built under licence by Mahindra, it stood little chance of making it big in Britain; it might have been robust and capable off-road, but Mahindra's 'Jeep' was simply too unsophisticated for most British buyers.

Looking at the photographs here, you could be forgiven for thinking that the same old Mahindra – known in its Indian homeland as the MM-series – is still in production. But no, this particular vehicle is the Mahindra Thar, an all-new model that arrived as recently as 2010 and underwent further useful updates for the 2016 model year. And frankly, we love it.

Jeep fans will argue that their beloved Wrangler is still going strong, and is a more convincing new variation on an old theme. In reality though, the JK-series Wrangler of 2007-on is drastically different from the TJ model that it replaced. You can tell at a glance it's a Wrangler (in much the same way that you know a 2016 Mini is a Mini, despite it being little more than an overgrown pastiche of the original), but it's a very different machine when viewed in closer detail.

You certainly don't get that problem with the Mahindra Thar, a 'Jeep' that disguises its relative newness brilliantly. Virtually nothing was carried over from the old MM-series, which explains why upon its launch the Thar boasted a new-design ladder-frame chassis (essentially a modified version of the Mahindra Scorpio SUV's), a 2.5-litre common-rail powerplant (pushing out 105bhp), all-independent suspension, power steering and other spots of modernity missing from its ancient predecessor. And yet it looked... well, it looked just like that ancient predecessor.

For 2016 the Thar has undergone further updates, with a new-design hood for better insulation from the weather, an all-new dashboard (which looks surprisingly smart) and more comfortable seats. Its off-road prowess has been improved too, thanks to the standard fitment of a limited-slip rear diff to complement the manually selected part-time four-wheel drive with dual-range transfer box. You also get a 200mm wading depth and very impressive approach and departure angles.

In its road test of the 2016-model Thar, *Autocar India* magazine was full of praise, suggesting that '*the 2.5-litre engine, putting out 105bhp, has enough grunt to pull you over most obstacles, evident by its performance on Mahindra's off-road track*'. In its conclusion, the same magazine insisted that '*for those looking for a tough off-roader to use on a daily basis... the Thar is still the best option out there*'. It just happens to look almost exactly like the ultra-basic Mahindra that British buyers were offered a quarter of a century ago... which is a good thing, right? **4x4**

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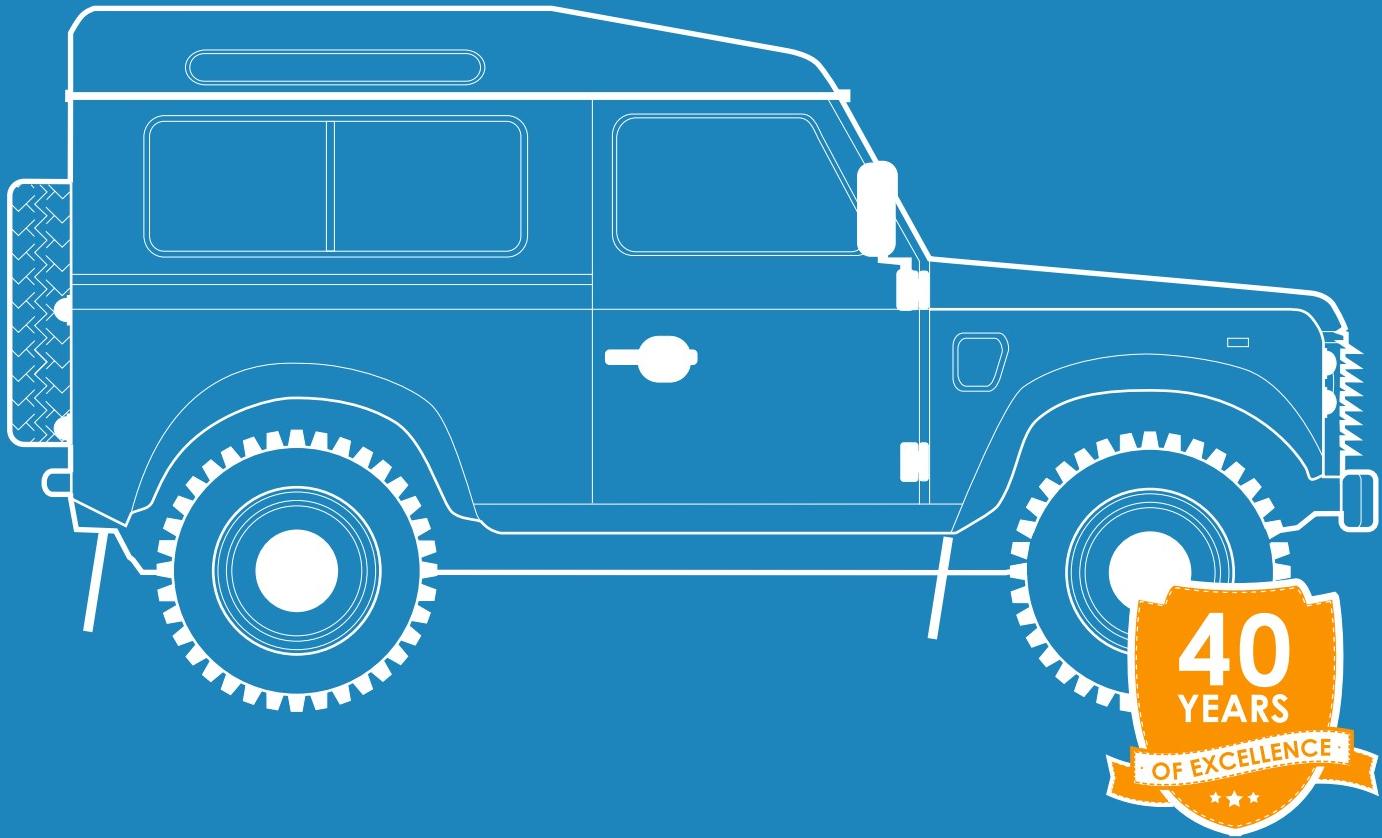
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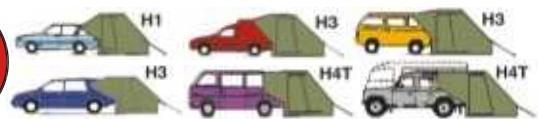


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TRADE ADVERTISERS CALL - 07701 071926

LAND ROVER

DISCOVERY



1995, £1,650 ono. Pick-up. Full MoT. 300 TDi. Updated springs. Ring for more info. Worcestershire. 07811 681316 (PB)

DISCOVERY TD5

2000, 165,000 miles, £3,000. 5 seat diesel. Manual. Jet black. December (S) model. New MoT. History. Serviced. Factory accessories. No rust. Excellent car. Never welded or off-roaded. Bristol. 01179 670009 / 07840 400569 (PB)

DISCOVERY TDI



1998, £2,000. 8 months MoT. Good clean condition. Lincs. 07754 944043 (HR)

MINERVA



1952, 18,000 miles, £7,995. Ex Belgian army, rust free, many new parts, fitted brakes, tyres, clutch, flywheel, lights, shock absorbers, oil seals. Some part parts pioneer parts. Tax free. Kent. 020 8464 8965 (SN)

SERIES III

1981, £3,500. LWB, truck cab. Diesel. 12 months MoT. FWH, new tyres, new shockers, wax oiled. Good starter, good runner, good body. Blackpool. Lancashire. 01253 723863 or 07859 092740 (RB)

SERIES III DIESEL



1979, £8,500. Reg TEE 402T. Full MoT, galvanised chassis, engine overhaul, rewired, free wheel hubs, overdrive, new swivel hubs, new seats, clutch kit, bulk head rebuilt, full set of chassis up rebuild photos on request. northernmicroplant@gmail.com. Manchester. 01616 886008 or 07749 866756

RANGE ROVER

CLASSIC

1991, £3,900 ono. 1 year's MoT with service history, 1 owner, completely original, all factory parts and extras, air con, leather, electric pack, no tow bar, is as it left the factory. Kent. 07951 852452

25E 4.5 AUTO



1993/94, 86,334 miles, £8,000 ono. Leather seats, walnut dash sunroof, automatic, taxed, MoT'd. British racing green. From new original hubs, new exhaust, air bag, back window. Herts. 07971 005737 / 01279 722777 (SN)

RANGE ROVER

1979, £1,200 ono. 2 door classic, white, 3.5l carb, rolling shell with axles, engine, log book, bumpers, all parts for 2 door their glass etc, will need 4 door donor possibly. Kent. 07951 852452

TWO DOOR

1979, £10,000 ono. Two door, blue, owned by same family for 20 years, runner, needs renovating. Essex. 07704 085826 or 01268 270573

TOYOTA

LANDCRUISER GX



1989, 157,000 miles, £1,050. 4 litre diesel, runner, needs welding to rear body mounts, detailed history, updated OME suspension. 07789 702887 (SN)

VEHICLE PARTS

2 ELEVATING ROOFS

£POA. For camper van, one fibre glass and one alloy will fit transit size vans. Phone for details and price, ask for Kevin. Cleveland. 07746 711490 (HR)

JEEP CHEROKEE SPARES

£POA. Phone for your requirements. Leicestershire. 01530 230013 (SN)

RANGE ROVER CLASSIC

£250 ono. New tailgate. Finished in Plymouth blue and correct decal. Lancashire. 07969 893266 (PB)

WANTED

ALL FORD RANGER TRUCKS



Wanted. Any year petrol or Diesel mot or not we collect good prices paid. (T). 07775 998628 (JW)

ALL NISSAN CABSTAR TRUCKS



Wanted. Any year condition running or not top prices paid we collect all over UK. (T). 07775 998628 (JW)

ALL TOYOTA HILUX TRUCKS



Wanted. Petrol or diesel two or four wheel drive clean or rusty top prices paid. (T). 07775 998628 (JW)

ALL VAUXHALL BRAVA TRUCKS AND ISUZU TRUCKS



Wanted. Any year clean or rusty we are very good buyers. (T). 07775 998628 (JW)

LAND ROVERS



Wanted. Any condition, diesel, petrol clean rusty top prices paid. We buy all land rovers(T). 07831 589763 (MC)

LANDROVER

£2,000, Wanted. Landrover wanted anything considered, MoT or not. Collection asap. Norfolk. 07775 203208

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Wanted. Or very similar, any condition considered, rusty, poorly, reasonable price paid but not afraid to pay a high price for a very nice one, please ring me for a chat, I am easy going, non pressurising, person, I can pay cash on collection. Ask for Robert. Devon. 01548 521278 (SN)

MISCELLANEOUS

3 TON TIPPING TRAILER



£95. Fully reconditioned, much new steel, new aluminium sides. Shropshire. 07891 492601 (SN)

ABI ACE AIRSTREAM 2 BERTH

1994, £500.25 ono. Li burner hob, grill, oven, fridge, gas fire 240/12v cassette. Toilet, gas bottles. Spare wheels, water waste barrels. Lanarksy. 07971 938808

CAMPER

1972, £5,000. Tin top, lots of work done, needs finishing, on Sorn. Kent. 07956 697939

ANTIQUE FUEL TANK



£145 buyer collects. Used behind road rollers. It's got oil box to store on iron wheel 3rd in good condition. Needs painting. 07833 097188 (SN)

BAILEY RANGER 460/2



2007, £5,250 ono. End bathroom, Serviced every year and stored undercover, new tyres last year. Comes with all the kit, (gas bottle waste and two water carriers) Ideal for holidays, shows and working weekends. Leicestershire. 07760 223511 (SN)

BAILEY SENATOR CAROLINA



£4,000. Twin axle, high spec and good condition. Lincs. 07720 705158 (HR)

BEDFORD TK FIRE ENGINE



1981, £12,000 ono. Motor home / hair salon conversion. Excellent money earner at fayres/exhibitions. 3 dressing stations, backwash, 2 large waste tanks, generator, and 240V. Sleeps 2 adults & 2 children. New MoT. Sussex. 01323 833873 / 07827 912512 (SN)

BESPOKE SHEPHERDS HUT



£Offers. Cedar exterior. Fully insulated. Electrical sockets and lights. Towable. Ply braced. Cladded interior. Plasticised tin roof. Hand made modern steps. Pneumatic tyres. All finished to high standard. Sensible offers please. Somerset. 07443 470079 (PB)

BLUELINE TRAILER

2004, £950 ONO. 3 tow plant trailer 10 x 6 floor space and 16 total length. Galvanised chassis 50mm rail hitch. New floor ramps with spare wheel, good condition. Lincolnshire. 01778 421443 / 07993 353046 (HR)

CAMPING TRAILER

£135. Hertfordshire. 01438 717912 (RB)

BRIAN JAMES TRAILER



£1,800. Special narrow car transporter, built by Brian James trailers with ramps, only 5ft wide between the wheels, 11ft8inch long load bed, ideal for a small classic car/jeep/tractor, 1.35 ton capacity, very light to tow, all new knot brakes and cables, lazer cut security marks, lockable tow bar, you won't see another like this. Devon. 01548 521278 (SN)

BUCCANEER CARAVAN



1980, £2,700. Pink bunks, grey blinds with pink trim display cabinets. Cut glass mirrors, cooker, fridge, gas fire blow heating. Good condition. Will part ex for vehicle or small caravan. Suffolk. 07799 223166 (PB)

CATERING TRAILER



£4,250. Multi purpose, 16ft x 7ft. 07970 973131

CATERING UNIT



£4,250. Towability made. Yorkshire. 07970 973131 (PB)

CITROEN ROMAHOME



1989, 98,000 miles, £2,950. MoT March 2016, no advisories, two new batteries, 12 volt TV/DVD, two bike rack, Fiamma awning, 1.8 XWD diesel, toilet Porta Potti, 12 volt cooler fridge, family motorhome so not needed. Suffolk. 01473 823633

DE WALT RADIAL ARM SAW

£475. Hertfordshire. 01438 717912 (RB)

IFOR WILLIAMS LM166

£2,500 ono. Summer use transporting vintage kit to local rallies. Excellent order with tyres, brakes electrics as new, having covered about 250 miles a year. The only fault is some slight chipping to the rear of the deck caused by my plough. Wrexham. 01244 570229

TRADE ADVERTISERS CALL: 07701 071926

DEVON MOTOR CARAVAN



1998, 49,000 miles, £10,000 ono.

Top of the range. Immaculate. 246cc. diesel. Cooker, fridge, full air con, hot and cold, bike rack, tow bar. Will part ex old bike. Shropshire. 01691 654508 (RB)

DONUT CATERING UNIT



£6,250. 10ft x 6ft. Very good condition. Boiler and super manual donut machine. Reluctant sale. Docklington. 07970 973131 (HR)

DRAG TRAILER



£5,850. With demountable 4 berth living quarters TV/toilet shower oven/ hob microwave separate bedroom. Hereford. 01981 251239 / 07828 011502 (HR)

EXPRESS CAMPER VAN

1990, 61,000 miles, £3,995. Diesel. With long MoT. Very clean example inside and out. Little use forces reluctant sale. West Midlands. 07950 398750 (PB)

FAIRGROUND ORGAN, TRUEMAN

£7,950. 2 KEYLESS.PLUS ABOUT 5 HRS OF CARD MUSIC. GOOD WORKING ORDER. Pembrokeshire. 01437 741207

FERGUSON 30CWT TRAILER

£Offers. Wheels, tyres, chassis and ram fitted. Cambs. 01733 844203 (SN)

FERGUSON MK 1



£350. 3 ton tipping trailer. Needs complete restoration. Good chassis/ram. Original hitch. Linkage missing. Nottinghamshire. 07774 816630 (PB)

FERGUSON TIPPING TRAILER

£450. 3 ton hydraulic, complete and working. Suffolk. 01379 644746

GRAHAM EDWARDS GT3514 PLANT TRAILER



£925. Good BD and tyres. Full width ramp winch 7ft x 14ft. Wilts. 07710 026012 (HR)

FORD TRANSIT MK1



1973, £6,250 ono. Mk1 Ford Transit Canterbury Savanah 2 1972/3, Tax exempt, MOT till June 2016. 2.0ltr Pinto Conversion with large alloy rad and electric fan. New front panel and bonnet fitted. Minimal rust very useable classic camper and will only increase in value. PX for VW type 3 fast back square back station wagon possible. Northamptonshire. 07931 579030 (HP)

FORD TRANSIT MK3 CAMPERVERN

1991, £950 ono. 2.0 Pinto petrol, automatic, 12 months' MoT, no rust on this van, good engine and auto box, new windscreen, reversing sensors, 240V hook up and 12V. Middlesex. 07709 230049

FRUEHAUF STEPFRAME

1992, £5,000. 45ft. New air bags, air chambers, shockers. EBS system. Paint good. Tyres 17.5's. Floor to finish. Cumbria. 07887 916972 (PB)

HARFORD



£450. 3 ton tipping trailer. Re-boarded throughout. Very good chassis. Norfolk. 01603 871291 (PB)

HIGHWAYMAN TRAILER

1969, £950. 26ft single axle with 4ft sides, been used on beet cart, very good trailer for old vintage tractor unit. Cambs. 07780 614280

HORSE MUCK/ YARD TRAILER



£2,800. New high capacity body with lightweight fold down front ramp. Chassis reconditioned, new bodies fitted to your chassis & new LED lights. Northants. 01280 702725 / 07799 836590

IFOR WILLIAMS EUROLIGHT TRAILER MODEL



£900. ELO71-2512 carry 750kg 8ft 8in long 4ft 6in wide. Drop sides, front & rear, complete with spare wheel. Just over a year old, used twice. Cost £1,400 would sell for asking price. East Sussex. 01424 871003 / 07801 844175

RUBERY OWEN TRAILER

£2,000. 7 tonne trailer with hydraulic braking system and tilt bed in good working order. Has 4 good 8.25 x 20 tyres. Surrey. 07813 864844 (PB)

IFOR WILLIAMS LM166



2011, £2,000 ono. All lights work and good brakes, 16ft x 6ft. Somerset. 01935 881109 or 07966 697446

IFOR WILLIAMS P80 LIVESTOCK TRAILER,

£1,300 ovno. Good condition throughout, recent new lights, only selling due to increase of stock. 07934 490307 (SN)

IFOR WILLIAMS TRAILER

£1,250. Twin wheel dropside, 10ft x 5ft 6in, two spare wheels, good tyres, brakes, new led lights, Ifor Williams ramps. Cornwall. 01326 562843 or 07881 658292

INDESPENSION TRAILER

£3,000. Tilt-bed, beavertail, replacement Meredith & Eyre beam axles, refloored, full tailgate, ramp, good tyres, stored inside, good 3,500 kg 16ft x 7ft 6in. Norfolk. 01362 683596

INDESPENSION TRAILER

£850 ono. With mesh sides, approx 8 x 4 x 4 light use only, excellent condition. Tyres good, spare unused. Props, jockey wheel, ideal for mowers or logs, locking hitch. Paid almost £1,500 last year! bargain! ring for more details. Northamptonshire. 07745 278433 (SN)

KONTIKI 6 BERTH

£5,500. Good condition. Yorkshire. 07702 417760 (SN)

LOW LOADER MACHINERY TRAILER



£2,750 ono + VAT. 12 ton, 20ft c/w front and rear jack legs, air brakes, adjustable high or low suspension with rear ramps, little used, unmarked rust free condition. Aberdeenshire. 01651 806306

MANUFACTURE TUMBRIL CART



1939, £1,200 ONO. Pneumatic tyres, new flooring, fantastic working condition. Norfolk. 01953 717270 / 07572 226152 (SN)

MERCEDES AUTOTRAIL SIOUX 307 D



69,000 miles, £3,200. New MoT. Hitch awning, roof rack, Esbacher diesel heater, fridge, water heater, etc. Two spare wheels. Dorset. 01483 892072 (HR)

PORTERS BARROW

£220. 4 wheels, refurbished. Hertfordshire. 01438 717912 (RB)

MERRYTILLER TRUCK



£350. Complete and in working order with range of tools for the Rotovator. Sussex. 01323 442842

MINIATURE SHEPHERDS HUT



£680 ono. One window and door, 8in blow up tyres, metal frame with TG alloy roof, light to move, needs tlc. Wiltshire. 01980 621319

MONTRACON STEPFRAME

2009, £10,000. 45ft. Flat. 19.5 tyres. 4 ramps. Tidy. May 16 test. Ideal machinery hay straw trailer. ROR running gear. Cumbria. 07887 916972 (PB)

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PLANT TRAILER

£1,350. Plant trailer ideal for small tractors 8' wide, 16' long sloping back with 12' flat bed with 5' heavy duty ramps. Yorkshire. 07974 966695 (HR)

POD LIFE

£800. Has a toilet, microwave, gas cooker and a shower. Sussex. 01293 513314 (HR)

SANKY TRAILER



£450. Wide track 3/4 tonne, 12V electrics, wood and canvas roof. Essex. 07984 855174

SKELLY TRAILER



1978, £5,500. Tandem axle, totally refurbished 3 years ago with new everything, less than 500 miles since reverb, you won't find better, for more info please call. Hampshire. 07974 748296 (HR)

SPRITE



£299. 14ft in good order. One lady last 12 years with no children or pets. Cheshire. 07801 442626

STURDY TAILOR MADE TRAILER



£250. Made to carry a big 30 cwt engine. Tyres like new. Brakes. Lancashire. 07754 771841 (TS)

SWIFT FLATBED TRAILER

£1,200 ono. 3.5 ton gw, approx 14ft x 6ft 6 bed, 16 inch alloy rims, 4 good tyres, spare rim, LED lights, M1 Junction 22. Leicestershire. 07769 678418 (SN)

TALBOT AUTO CAMPER



1989, £3,650. Coach built, good clean condition with recent MoT. New radiator plus battery cycle rack. Swansea. 01792 895396 (HR)

TANDEM AXLE FLATBED TRAILER



£1,000 ono. Blue line 12 ft x 6.6, very little work, all original tyres. Surplus to requirement. Lincolnshire. 01526 860573 (SN)

TIPPING TRAILER WHEATLY



£350. Ring for more details. 01472 388420

TRAFIC



1987, £5,500. Camper, auto, sleeper. Petrol 170c.c. MoT Sept 2016. Ready to go. Phone for details. Nottinghamshire. 07711 063385 (RB)

TRAILER



£1,495 + vat. 2 ton capacity, fully galvanized, 2.5m (8ft) long by 1.25m (4ft) wide, drop down sides and rear (leaving very useful flat deck), floatation turf tyres. (T). Preston. 01253 799029 (BM)

TRAILER

£250. Rebuilt with new timber. New 10" tyres, drop tail gate 6x4 and good condition. Monmouthshire. 01873 830973

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What's coming in 4x4 Magazine

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Northern lights by 4x4 van

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The new Navara arrives in the UK

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New off-road driving opportunity

RAINFOREST RUN

Full Challenge report

Plus we have the latest from the D-Max project, a wild Willys oddball, up to date Auction deals, Club News and our full off-road event calendar

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4x4

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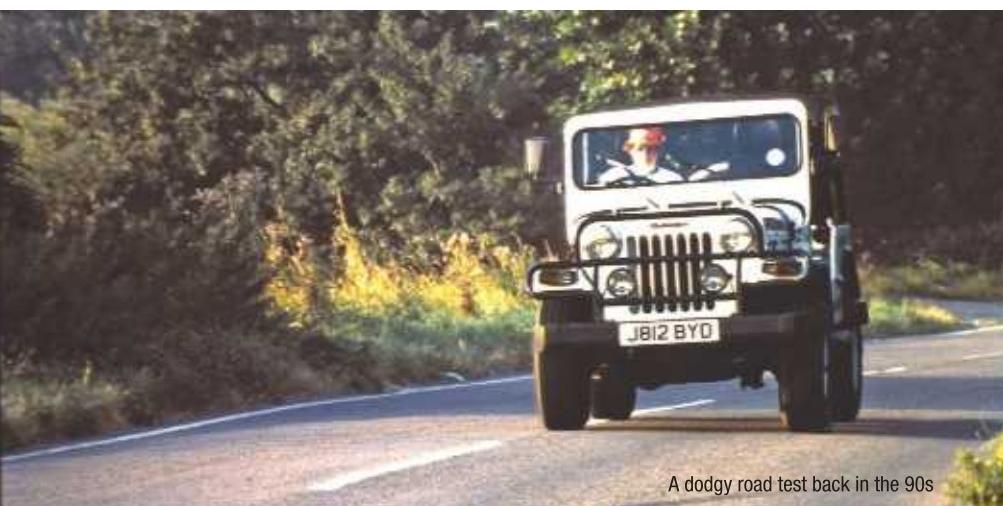
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Indian bummer

Mahindra Chief? Apache? Brave? Wrong kind of Indian, It should have been Maharajah, Swami - or better still, Untouchable... although an old one could make a high-fun dedicated off-roader



A dodgy road test back in the 90s

I wasn't very complimentary about the Mahindra when I first encountered one back in the late 1980s. It wasn't just that I thought it was too rough an old truck to be allowed on British roads, it was mainly the price the importers had put on it - £8600, for heaven's sake, some £2000 more than a much more capable, more technically advanced coil-sprung Lada Niva, equivalent to £19,000 in today's money. The Mahindra is a licence-built copy of the Jeep CJ3 of 1948, and even in its 1990 guise as tested in our March issue of that year hadn't advanced much over the original design, in fact it had slipped somewhat in having a licence-built version of the old Peugeot XD diesel engine with 60 horsepower, not only a plodding performer but noisy as well.

The Mahindra was built in India to provide cheap and practical transport for the country's rapidly expanding infrastructure, so there was no need to build in any modern refinements. It didn't surprise us when the importers, Motor Industry Investments, went bust; significantly they had also made the unwise decision to import the first-generation Dacia Duster, which was even worse than the Mahindra. What did surprise us was that a new company, Crusader Automotive, was formed to continue importing the Mahindra... for a while.

At the time we planned to put this interesting exotic newcomer through the usual full road test procedure, which involved accurate measurements of its top speed, 0-60mph acceleration, braking effectiveness and fuel consumption. Since I couldn't actually get it to do 60mph, and it took nearly half a minute to

struggle to 55mph, I skipped the performance part of the test and concentrated on the braking. The test procedure was to accelerate the car to three quarters of its top speed and braking as hard as possible 10 times in quick succession to check for fade. Hence I took the Mahindra up to 40mph and slammed on the anchors, nearly losing control altogether as the front tucked in and swerved to the right while the back went light and swung to the left, with only my skill as a professional driver preventing the car from switching ends. So I gave up on that test too, simply describing it in my report as a lot of money for not much car. I had completely ignored the Mahindra thereafter until I came across James Taylor enjoying himself in the Apache that he'd rescued from a barn, and

realised that it probably could be a really good little budget off-roader, as long as you don't expect much performance, refinement or control on the road. And then, just a week or so later, I discovered that David Round of Llama 4x4, Jeep off-road modification specialist, had bought his 17-year old son James an old Mahindra to use as his first car - it is, after all, a Jeep at heart. David hasn't let the car go as he found it, after tidying it up he gave it a smart red paint job, replaced the worn original leaves with Rough Country CJ5 springs giving it a three-inch lift, reversed the front shackles to allow for longer spring movement with new spring mounts and Rough Country N2.0 dampers all round, along with a matching steering damper kit. The lift allows for 235/85x16 Fedima diamond pattern tyres, the cockpit features sports bucket seats and harnesses, the original rollover bar has been braced to the chassis with a supporting diagonal, and the roll cage has been extended over the front. The front bumper carries a 9500lb Rough Country winch; the rear has a custom fabricated swing away spare wheel carrier. The cost of the conversions was around £4000, turning a dodgy old truck into an eye-catching and competent runabout, which gives James enormous pleasure on road as well as off (see *Your 4x4 Life*, page 80, plus *Oddballs*, page 88).

It's hard to ignore the possibility that if the Mahindra had been priced at that level from the start there'd probably be a lot more of them giving budget off-road fun to a lot more young enthusiasts, but in the meantime it may be worth checking those old barns in case there's an old untouchable waiting to be transformed into a modern minor maharajah.. **Bob**



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